Moving with Dharma: A Co-Creative Artistic Exploration of Buddhist Teachings in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper, "Moving with Dharma," explores the co-creative artistic exploration of Buddhist teachings (Dhamma) within the contemporary Indonesian context. Responding to the need for accessible and contemporary artistic expressions of Buddhism, it employs a Practice as Research (PaR) methodology, emphasizing experiential learning and collaborative artmaking. The study details a process involving workshops, individual reflections, and a public performance, illustrating how Dhamma principles such as impermanence (Anicca), suffering (Dukkha), and non-self (Anatta) manifest as lived experiences, fostering personal transformation and interreligious dialogue. Findings highlight that PaR serves as a profoundly transformative yet personally challenging journey, leading to moments of profound insight (Nibbida and Viraga). The research also reveals a crucial tension between artistic expression and the concept of Anatta, navigating the artist's ego while demonstrating how art functions as a skillful means (Upaya Kausalya) to convey universal truths and promote understanding across diverse audiences. Critically, the study identifies a significant systemic gap in accessibility for deaf Buddhists in Indonesia, underscored by linguistic barriers in sign language interpretation for specific Buddhist vocabulary and practices. This research ultimately affirms the power of co-creative art in embodying Dhamma, revealing its universal relevance, and underscoring the imperative for greater inclusivity in spiritual and artistic dissemination.

Keywords: *Dhamma, Buddhist Studies, Contemporary Art, Co-creation, Practice as Research*

Abstrak

Makalah ini, "Moving with Dharma," mengeksplorasi eksplorasi artistik ko-kreatif ajaran Buddhis (Dhamma) dalam konteks Indonesia kontemporer. Menanggapi kebutuhan akan ekspresi artistik Buddhisme yang mudah diakses dan kontemporer, penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi Praktik sebagai Penelitian (PaR), yang menekankan pembelajaran pengalaman dan penciptaan seni kolaboratif. Studi ini merinci proses yang melibatkan lokakarya, refleksi individu, dan pertunjukan publik, menggambarkan bagaimana prinsip-prinsip Dhamma seperti ketidakkekalan (*Anicca*), penderitaan (*Dukkha*), dan tanpa-diri (*Anatta*) bermanifestasi sebagai pengalaman hidup, mendorong transformasi pribadi dan dialog antaragama. Temuan menyoroti bahwa PaR berfungsi sebagai perjalanan yang sangat transformatif namun menantang secara pribadi, mengarah pada momen-momen wawasan yang mendalam (*Nibbida* dan *Viraga*). Penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan ketegangan penting antara ekspresi artistik dan konsep Anatta, menavigasi ego seniman sambil menunjukkan bagaimana seni berfungsi sebagai sarana terampil (*Upaya Kausalya*) untuk menyampaikan kebenaran universal dan mempromosikan pemahaman di berbagai audiens. Secara kritis, studi ini mengidentifikasi kesenjangan sistemik yang signifikan dalam

aksesibilitas bagi umat Buddha tuli di Indonesia, yang digarisbawahi oleh hambatan linguistik dalam interpretasi bahasa isyarat untuk kosakata dan praktik Buddhis tertentu. Penelitian ini pada akhirnya menegaskan kekuatan seni ko-kreatif dalam mewujudkan Dhamma, mengungkapkan relevansinya yang universal, dan menggarisbawahi keharusan untuk inklusivitas yang lebih besar dalam diseminasi spiritual dan artistik.

Keywords: Dhamma, Studi Buddha, Seni Kontemporer, Ko kreasi, Practice as Research

INTRODUCTION

The study of Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, within the Indonesian Buddhist community is marked by an ongoing discussion regarding its accessibility to non-Buddhists. This debate presents a unique challenge for individuals outside the Buddhist religion who seek to engage with these profound teachings. For us, this endeavor is inherently a journey of self-discovery, aiming to clarify personal identity and life's trajectory through the lens of Dhamma. This paper also emerges as a direct response to a significant discussion held during a visit to the Vihara Griya Vipasana Avalokitesvara, Kabupaten Magelang, on March 12, 2025.

During a seminar collaboratively organized by Fo Guang Shan, CRCS UGM, STAB Raden Wijaya, and Walubi, Yulianti articulated a critical need for the development of contemporary art within Indonesian Buddhism. Her emphasis was on art that effectively reflects the current societal and spiritual conditions of Buddhism in the archipelago. This assertion highlights a potential avenue for Dhamma dissemination and engagement that transcends traditional boundaries, particularly relevant to non-Buddhist learners.

Understanding Dhamma

Buddhadhamma, which refers to Buddhist teaching and practice, offers a pragmatic approach to understanding and addressing suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path leading to its cessation, as outlined in the four noble truths (*Ariya-sacca*) (Masinter, 2018, p. ii) These truths can be applied to suffering, whether internal (mind/culture) or external (environment). The application of central Buddhist teachings and practices leads to social action (Masinter, 2018, p. 8). Buddhadhamma cultivates a mind and heart that are clear, open, and responsive to suffering, enabling appropriate engagement in ways appropriate to the problem as well as the means, ability, and inclination of that individual or community, the Dhamma of each person or group.

Ajahn Buddhadasa offered a multifaceted interpretation of Dhamma, identifying four core aspects within the suttas: Nature itself (*Sabhāva Dhamma*), the Law of Nature (*Sacca Dhamma*), the duty of living beings following Natural Law (*patipatti Dhamma*), and the results of fulfilling that duty (*pativedha Dhamma*) (Masinter, 2018, p. 28). Budhadhasa further emphasized that "Nature is Dhamma, Dhamma is Nature". Buddhadasa viewed all universal activity, including ecological interconnectedness, as Dhamma while asserting that the cultivation of the Eightfold Path reveals individual duty (Dhamma), often manifesting as social action, and that a genuine understanding of Dhamma is crucial for fostering harmony within both social and ecological systems.

The Dhamma holds profound significance across various aspects of Buddhist life. One "goes to the Dhamma as refuge," alongside the Buddha and the Sangha, as a core tenet of practice (Harvey, 2000, p. 80). Moreover, individuals are encouraged to have "Dhamma and oneself as one's refuge, by the practice of careful mindfulness" (Harvey, 2000, p. 67). Furthermore, the "gift of Dhamma excels all gifts", with teaching and listening to Dhamma being considered "bases for effecting karmically fruitful actions" (Harvey, 2000, pp. 61–62).

Practice is essential to understanding the Dhamma, as Buddhadasa believed that the "true Dhamma is not spread by word of mouth or through books; only the paths of action which aim at having the Dhamma appear in the heart can be communicated..." (Masinter, 2018, pp. 30–31). In this view,

merely intellectualizing Dhamma is insufficient; true understanding requires personal investigation and active engagement. Furthermore, seeing dependent origination is considered equivalent to seeing the Dhamma (Masinter, 2018, pp. 35–36), highlighting the importance of direct experiential insight. Right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*), central to Buddhist pursuits, illuminates the interconnectedness between our views, actions, and societal conditions.

It's important to highlight language as it plays a critical role in conveying the Dhamma, with a distinct difference between "everyday language" and "Dhamma Language" (Masinter, 2018, pp. 36–37). Dhamma language, spoken by those with deep insight, employs terms appropriate to their experiential understanding, which may diverge from conventional interpretations. For instance, the Buddha's use of "world" in the Dhamma language refers to the experience of phenomena arising at the sense doors (Masinter, 2018, p. 38). The concept of dependent origination (*paticcasamuppāda*), the interconnectedness of all things, is deeply intertwined with Dhamma (Masinter, 2018, pp. 10–11). Understanding this concept opposes the individualistic selfishness of the "consumer narrative" (Masinter, 2018, p. 49).

Interestingly, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu suggested that during the Buddha's time, the practice he taught was referred to as brahmacharya (the sublime way of life), indicating that Dhamma, in its essence, is not limited to the label "Buddhism" (Masinter, 2018, pp. 50–51). This perspective underscores the universal applicability of Dhamma principles. Modern society may indeed require a similar sublime way of life, regardless of religious label, to foster harmonious relationships. This recognition, that a non-Buddhist may have a deep understanding of Dhamma, resonates with my positionality of a non-Buddhist learning Buddhism.

When social action emerges from a deep understanding of Dhamma, it mutually conditions nature and society towards harmony. The fundamental truth of Dhamma is that problems arise from ignorance (*avijja*), a lack of seeing things as they truly are (Masinter, 2018, p. 91). Therefore, the practice of *Buddhadhamma* involves abandoning the causes of suffering and cultivating harmless and beneficial conditions.

The potential of learning Buddhist teachings through the arts

As previously written that learning Buddhism is crucial through practice, application, and action (Masinter, 2018, p. 30), We propose that we can learn Buddhism through the mindful practices of art and performance making. According to the teachings of Phra Payutto (Seeger et al., 2024, pp. 435–436), seemingly simple pleasures like music and art possess the potential to become powerful instruments for self-improvement. By employing these forms of entertainment with mindful moderation and skill, individuals can elevate their enjoyment and simultaneously engage in meaningful personal development. He emphasizes that ethical lay practitioners can utilize artistic and athletic activities to enhance their moral character. Furthermore, the term "*sādhukīḷana*" or "*sādhukīḷita*" suggests that these activities can be understood as sacred or celebratory forms of play.

Seeger et al. (2024) provide a compelling example of innovative engagement with Buddhist teachings through devised theater. Their article details the development, execution, and impact of two performances designed to connect audiences with both Buddhist doctrine and contemporary gender issues within Thai Buddhism. These "Buddhist performing arts" projects sought to offer an engaging and effective method for promoting interest and understanding of Buddhism, encompassing both its doctrinal framework and its lived practices. The intellectual foundation for these performances stemmed from Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's "Theatre of Dhammic Conversation," which recognized the potential of a play-like format to enhance the study and enjoyment of the Dhamma. The first performance, staged in 2018, primarily drew inspiration from Hat Tham ("Practicing the Dhamma"), a unique early 20th-century Thai Buddhist text that explores women's perspectives and experiences with the Dhamma through a question-and-answer structure (*pucchāvissajjanā*). Building upon this success,

the second performance in 2019 utilized poetic texts by Khunying Damrongthammasan and other materials from the book Damrong Tham, including "How to Listen to a Sermon" and well-known *paritta* (protection) texts.

The second example is by Thongtawee (2017) that use acrylic painting and video art making as the medium of Samatha meditation. It is intriguing to investigate how engaging in artistic practices, such as acrylic painting and video art, can facilitate the experiential learning of Buddhist Dhamma. This approach presents an innovative way to develop concentration, mindfulness, and self-reflection, like the effects of traditional Buddhist meditation.

As both scholar and artist, we highlighted Seeger et al., pp. (2024, pp. 441–442) notion that developing alternative means in performance making could help younger Thai Buddhists to engage and relate to traditional Buddhist pedagogy. This approach can engage both performers and audiences regarding the teaching, especially between Buddhist and non-Buddhist individuals. Therefore, this paper investigates "how do Buddhist teachings, particularly Dharma, influence the personal and artistic processes involved in the creation of collaborative performance art within the contemporary Indonesian Buddhist context?"

METHODS

The research is based on the aesthetic intersubjective paradigm. This paradigm recognizes that art can share truths and create awareness, including knowledge about oneself and others (Leavy, 2020, pp. 20–21, 2023, p. 210). It values many ways of knowing, such as preverbal, sensory, emotional, perceptual, kinesthetic (body movement), embodied, and imaginal (related to imagination) forms of knowledge (Leavy, 2020, p. 21, 2023, pp. 14,210, 269). It is considered an alternative approach that challenges conventional positivist notions of social reality and encourages an inductive model, fostering openness to what is spontaneous and unknown (Leavy, 2020, pp. 8, 11, 20).

Practice as Research (PaR) is presented as a methodology where research is primarily undertaken through a practice (praxis), and where the practice itself can serve as primary evidence of the research insights (Nelson, 2022, p. 18). Practice as Research (PaR) holds significant relevance for Buddhist Studies because it offers a methodological framework to explore and understand Buddhist teachings and practices through experiential engagement, artistic creation, and contemplative disciplines. It will support us as a researcher for experiential understanding of Dhamma, provide alternative paths to understanding, embodied knowing and intuitive understanding, self-reflection as a Research Process, making tacit knowledge explicit, discover praxis in Buddhist Studies, and contextualizing Buddhist practices.

For this study, Katresna served as the lead researcher, producer, and actor. Pangastuti, Hidalgo, and Saka collaborated as co-authors to create and perform a piece of performance art. Katresna guided the artists through several workshops and collaborative art-making processes. The co-creation art-making process was chosen because it acknowledges art as a social phenomenon rooted in human experience, where artistic value emerges not only from expert opinion but also from broader audience interaction, thereby fostering a sense of community through shared experience and collective interpretation (Luonila & Jyrämä, 2020).

Data was collected through field notes, conversation transcripts, reflection notes, and performance documentation. The collected qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and insights related to the research questions. Additionally, a detailed performance analysis was conducted on our performance, examining artistic choices, audience engagement, and the manifestation of Dhamma principles within the artistic expression.

Research Activities

The research activities comprised two workshops. For the first workshop, we followed Seeger et al., (2024, p. 444) by initiating inquiry through name introductions and sharing our interest in

Buddhism, particularly our relationship with the teaching of Dhamma. Then, we utilized six-word poetry, a method derived from Maria Majorie Purino, and "Pre-Texts" by Sommer (2023). Pre-Texts is a method designed to holistically stimulate cognitive, emotional, and social learning by activating creativity. We read our poems aloud, explored tangents, and shared related materials and experiences. Throughout this process, we incorporated compassionate listening techniques, which enable individuals to access their heart's wisdom, fostering enhanced peace and healing in their relationships with themselves and others (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 12).

The second workshop involved practicing Daundala Awicarita, a mindful arts approach that entails brushing veined leaves and drawing mandalas on them. This practice fosters Samatha meditation during the activity. Following the practice, participants shared their experiences related to Buddhist teachings.

Artistic decisions were made after the first workshop. Each contributing author proceeded with their individual artistic practice and reflection, which were later consolidated in a single meeting before the performance. The performance was held at Balai Budaya Minomartani on May 17, 2025, at 7 PM. The entire project was co-organized with the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies, the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies, Paradance Platform, Balai Budaya Minomartani, Radio BBM, and Adisukma Initiatives.

RESULT

Initial Research Meeting & Performance Vision

On March 29th, 2025, a significant Zoom meeting took place, where Katresna presented a research idea to Pangastuti. The central focus of their discussion revolved around an upcoming performance at Balai Budaya Minomartani, aiming to explore art as a means of fostering Dharma awareness. During the meeting, the esteemed figure of Prapto Suryodharmo was acknowledged, influencing the concept of dance as a profound tool for meditation. This idea found its expression in the Amerta Movement dance, which was described as a visual representation of meditation itself. The discussion delved into three core principles underpinning this practice: freedom, pure observation, and the act of dissolving or becoming truly aware. The emphasis was on living these principles fully, seeing meditation as an avenue to freedom, where one gains a heightened consciousness of one's own movements. This internal focus, they believed, enables a deeper look within, leading to personal growth and self-improvement. The conversation also touched upon a Buddhist State College and its work in Buddhist art and culture research. A notable point was the use of mudras, traditionally found in Javanese dance and Buddhist rituals, suggesting their potential for integration as a contemporary artistic medium.

First Workshop: Compassionate Listening, 6 Words Poetry, and Pre-text

April 12, 2025, Yogyakarta Coffeeshop

The first workshop took place on April 12, 2025, at a coffee shop in Yogyakarta, with participants Katresna (facilitator), Pangastuti, and Hidalgo. The session followed the principle of compassionate listening. The session began with participants introducing themselves, sharing their names and the meanings behind them, and reflecting on how Buddha Dharma held significance in their lives.

Gutami Hayu Pangastuti (referred to as Tami or Gutami) identified herself as an art student and traditional singer, currently focusing on Buddhist art. She mentioned having released several singles with Buddhist Dharma themes. Gutami shared that her connection to Buddha Dharma did not come from her family, who are Kejawen, but rather began in her third year of high school when her older brother announced he was studying Buddhism. She later realized her name, Gutami, relates to Prajapati Gotami, the Buddha's adoptive mother, which made her name more meaningful. For Gutami, the Buddha's teachings are "*ibarat baju gitu, dia sederhana, enggak kelap-kelip enggak mahal juga tapi nyaman banget tuh pakai itu*" (like clothes, simple, not sparkly or expensive but very comfortable to wear). She also views art as a path to learning Dharma.

Victorhugo Hidalgo Martinez (referred to as Viki) explained that "Viki" is a nickname given to him by Indonesian friends, as it's not a common male name in his home country, Mexico. Viki is a doctoral student in performing arts at ISI Yogyakarta, specializing in contemporary wayang (shadow puppetry) based on Jataka tales. His interest in Buddhism began in childhood, despite growing up in a predominantly Catholic Mexico, drawn to the peaceful expression on the Buddha's face, especially when depicted in Nirvana. He started formally learning about Buddhism at 19 after encountering a large Asian diaspora in Argentina. Viki believes Buddhism offers answers to many contemporary human questions, particularly regarding dissatisfaction and navigating challenging environments. He frequently incorporates "*konsep sutra dan mantram dalam musik*" (the concept of sutra and mantra in music), viewing prayer as the foundation for his compositions.

Katresna (facilitator) shared that his full name, Rhaka Katresna, carries his parents' hope for him to be a "*seorang kakak yang pengasih atau bapak yang pengasih*" (a loving older brother or a loving father). He described his life journey as one of constant redirection, never fully settling into one path, which he connected to his understanding of Buddhism. He noted experiencing significant suffering and "karmic relationship" involving loss, leading him to question his path and focus on the present. His adoption of Buddhism was a "last minute choice" after a conversation with his lecturer guide, a practitioner following the teachings of Mbah Prapto. Katresna also revealed his current involvement with the Buddhist Education Center of Fo Guang Shan, participating in their online education program.

Following the introductions, we wrote a six-word poem describing their life journey, a method Katresna learned from Maria Majorie Purino from University of San Carlos as a form of Buddhist poetry. The poems aimed to be powerful personal reflections on their Dharma paths.

Katresna's poem was: "this is the path of flow ". He explained this reflects his journey of being swept by a current without knowing its destination, adapting as the flow changes or branches. Viki's poem was: "*Matahari ungu, gelap terang, petualangan, anicca*" (Purple sun, dark light, adventure, *anicca*). Hidalgo associated "purple sun" with sunset, a time he finds inspiring for artistic creation, and "dark light" with his experiences of extremes. "Adventure" represents his desire for diverse experiences , and *anicca*, meaning impermanence or releasing, is a concept he is "*masih PR untuk saya karena saya banyak hal yang saya belum bisa melepas dan semoga suatu hari bisa memeluk konsep ini dengan benar*" (still a homework for me because there are many things I haven't been able to let go of and hopefully one day I can truly embrace this concept). Gutami's poem was: "*Anak kecil, Seroja, perubahan, karma, selaras, bahagia*" (Little child, Seroja, change, karma, harmonious, happy). "*Anak kecil*" (little child) signifies a fresh mindset, and a longing for the initial, serene feeling of encountering Buddhism, before feeling "*semakin tersesat*" (more lost) in deeper study. "Seroja," another name for the lotus flower, symbolizes resilience and hope, thriving even in muddy waters. "Perubahan" (change) relates to *anicca*, embracing impermanence to find peace. "Karma" reflects her belief in the consequences of actions, and "selaras bahagia" (harmonious, happy) is her aspiration for a life in alignment with all beings.

Table 1. 6 words poetry by Katresna, Pangastuti, and Hidalgo.

Katresna	Pangastuti	Hidalgo
This is the path of flows	Anak-kecil Seroja Perubahan Karma Selaras Bahagia *(English translation)* *Little child* *Lotus flower*	Matahari ungu Gelap-terang Petualangan Anicca *(English translation)* *Purple sun* *Dark-light* *Adventure* *Anicca*

	Change *Karma* *Harmonius* *Happy*	

The participants then discussed the shared themes or "tangents" emerging from their six-word poems and individual experiences. The primary resonance identified was the concept of "flows". The notion of "flows" resonated strongly among all participants, connecting to *anicca* (impermanence), the idea of life as an "adventure," and constant "*perubahan*" (change). This understanding, though difficult, was recognized as a shared truth. Katresna used the metaphor of a "gong" to describe the strong resonance felt among them, suggesting that their shared understanding could create a ripple effect that would be felt by an audience during a performance. The "gong" was also interpreted as symbolizing both an end and a new beginning, with a sound that never truly ceases.

The discussion naturally shifted to the fear of death. Katresna expressed a desire to complete certain tasks in his life before dying peacefully, stating, "*kalau itunya belum terpenuhi saya ngerasa matipun tidak akan tenang*" (if that hasn't been fulfilled, I feel that even if I die, I won't be at peace). Gutami noted that in Buddhism, "*kematian itu awal yang baru untuk kehidupan*" (death is a new beginning for life), which helps to alleviate fear. We concurred that death is an inevitable occurrence, and Buddhist teachings emphasize actions performed before death. The idea of not fearing things, but also not holding onto them too tightly, aligned with the Buddhist concept of the Middle Path, becoming "*pengamat saja*" (just an observer). This led to a discussion on releasing personal desires and avoiding ostentation, even as artists who inherently seek validation for their work.

We explored the tension between artistic creation as an expression of ego and the principles of Buddhism. We questioned whether art created from a Buddhist perspective could transcend ego. We acknowledged that criticism of one's art can be painful, with Hidalgo stating, "*Kalau karya kita dijelekkan, kita pasti sakit kan*" (If our work is criticized, we will definitely be hurt, right?). Katresna introduced the concept of "suffering preservation," where certain personal struggles are maintained as a theme for artistic work, connecting this to *samsara*, the continuous cycle of suffering. Viki noted the scarcity of explicitly Buddhist artists compared to those of other religions, suggesting that "*yang kita pamerkan itu bukan ajaran Sang Buddha tapi diri kita*" (what we perform is not the Buddha's teachings but ourselves). Pangastuti likened Buddhist art to a puzzle, where creating pieces for others, even for monastics (*Bhante*), has unexpectedly led her to delve deeper into Buddhist teachings and self-reflection. She also mentioned critiquing her own songs, stating, "*Aku masih sering dengerin laguku sendiri dan mengkritik lagu sendiri*" (I still often listen to my own songs and criticize them myself).

We discussed how Buddhist art, while framed within Dharma, can be universally accepted. We considered that truly Buddhist art might not explicitly state its origin but rather embody it, allowing audiences to recognize its essence. Hidalgo highlighted the need for a stronger Buddhist artistic identity, observing a lack of Buddhist songs compared to other religious music. There was a shared concern that the openness of Buddhism could lead to misinterpretations when artists adopt teachings arbitrarily. The workshop concluded with a preliminary discussion of artistic ideas for a performance.

Personal Bodily Exercise Between Workshop Meetings

This section details the nature and impact of the personal bodily exercise undertaken by Katresna between the first and second meetings of the initial workshop. This exercise served as a practical application of the concepts discussed and offered insights into Katresna's individual process of embodiment and reflection.

Following the first workshop meeting, Katresna engaged in a daily personal bodily exercise from April 22nd to April 26th, 2025. This practice involved selecting a song that evoked a connection to Dharma and then dancing to it for approximately one minute. Katresna noted, "*Praktik yang ku lakukan sendiri adalah memilih satu lagu yang mengingatkan pada Dharma kemudian menari selama 1 menit.*

Videonya ku unggah setiap hari." (My own practice is choosing a song that reminds me of Dharma then dancing for 1 minute. I upload the video every day.) A video of this daily performance was uploaded as part of the documentation process. The core focus of this exercise was a personal engagement with the concepts of *anicca* (impermanence) and mortality, as highlighted in Katresna's reflection on April 22nd: "*Yang menjadi sorotoan adalah anicca dan kematian*." (The highlight is *anicca* and death.) Concurrently, Pangastuti and Hidalgo undertook separate exercises aligned with their individual activities and agendas, reflecting diverse approaches to personal embodiment within the broader workshop context.

Image 1. Katresna (2025) dancing on Instagram, May 17th, 2025



Throughout this period, Katresna acknowledged feelings of vulnerability, both as a dancer and a choreographer, stating, "*Saat dipikirkan kembali, aku merasa rentan sebagai penari maupun koreografer. Pengalaman diskriminasi yang panjang membuat diriku merasa rendah diri*." (When I rethink it, I feel vulnerable as a dancer and choreographer. Long experiences of discrimination make me feel insecure.) Despite these challenges and the presence of doubt, Katresna maintained a consistent and diligent approach to the practice. This persistence stemmed from a foundational belief in the importance of continued effort, as expressed: "*Meskipun demikian, aku meneruskan praktik yang dilakukan secara tekun dan konsisten. Meskipun ada keraguan, ada ada alasan untuk terus berupaya*." (Nevertheless, I continue the practice diligently and consistently. Although there is doubt, there is a reason to keep trying.)

The personal bodily exercise provided a unique space for Katresna to process internal and external stimuli. A key observation from the April 26th reflection indicated a marked improvement in Katresna's ability to respond to feedback that did not align with initial expectations. Katresna articulated this shift: "*Baru kali ini aku bisa merespons lebih baik saat menerima jawaban yang tidak sesuai harapan. Aku butuh distraksi itu benar, dan tidak apa mendengar sambil melakukan kegiatan lain. Aku butuh waktu untuk memproses pengetahuan. Akhirnya, aku menyortir apa yang ku terima dan menyampaikan kembali*." (This is the first time I could respond better when receiving an answer that was not as expected. I do need distraction, that's true, and it's okay to listen while doing other activities. I need time to process knowledge. Finally, I sorted what I received and conveyed it back.) This development was attributed to the recognition of a need for distraction and the allowance of processing information while engaging in other activities. Katresna noted the necessity of time to assimilate knowledge, ultimately leading to a more effective sorting and re-articulation of received information.

A specific interaction with a "Fa Shi" (Dharma teacher) on the evening prior to the April 26th reflection further illuminated the impact of the exercise. The Fa Shi's communication style is described

as "rough" due to its singular focus on right and wrong ("*Fashi semalam fokus pada benar-salah. Itu terasa kasar buatku*." - Last night, the Fa Shi focused on right and wrong. That felt harsh to me.), was initially challenging. However, Katresna's enhanced capacity for processing difficult feedback, cultivated through the daily exercise, allowed for acceptance of this direct approach. A critical distinction was drawn between this interaction and past experiences with a person that had elicited a "trauma response." Katresna noted, "*Yang bikin berbeda dengan X (ada respons trauma saat memperoleh umpan balik) adalah Fa shi tidak merendahkan ataupun menghakimi diri ku. Jadi ada batasan jelas antara pendidikan dan perundungan.*" (What made it different from X (who had a trauma response when receiving feedback) was that the Fa Shi did not demean or judge me. So, there is a clear boundary between education and bullying.) The Fa Shi's approach, crucially, was perceived as non-demeaning and non-judgmental, establishing a clear boundary between educational instruction and bullying. This experience led Katresna to understand the Fa Shi's communication as a deliberate method for asserting principles of right and wrong, stating, "*Aku pun menyadari mungkin memang begitulah gaya komunikasi Fa Shi, untuk memberi ketegasan soal prinsip benar-salah*," (I also realized that perhaps that is the Fa Shi's communication style, to provide assertiveness on principles of right and wrong,) a form of clarity that the personal bodily exercise had prepared Katresna to receive.

Beyond the immediate bodily experience, the exercise also reinforced Katresna's understanding of Dharma as a discipline for cultivating goodness. This extended to practical applications within daily life, including actively encouraging family members to abstain from bribery. This indicates that personal bodily exercise was not merely a physical activity but a catalyst for deeper ethical engagement and the embodiment of Dharma principles in everyday conduct.

Second Meeting of the 1st Workshop: May 3, 2025, Saka's House

The second workshop, held on May 3, 2025, at Saka's house. The meeting involved Katresna and Saka. The session focused on similar themes as the first, ensuring comprehensive data collection for the research.

Satya Aji Saka (referred to as Saka) shared his full name, given by his father, a cultural figure, with the hope that he would be a "*seorang budayawan itu loh, pengen anaknya bener itu*" (a cultural figure, who wants his child to be proper). His full name, *Satya Aji Saka*, means "*kebenaran...raja...tiang*" (truth...king...pillar). However, he found the weight of this name challenging and prefers to use "Sakasatiya" for performances, interpreting it as "*cuman orang lurus aja, cuma orang biasa aja*" (just a straight person, just an ordinary person). Saka views Dharma as "*suatu alat ya untuk aku memperoleh tujuan, mempercepat proses*" (a tool for me to achieve goals, accelerate processes), akin to "*ilmu pengetahuan*" (knowledge) that leads to acceptance, acknowledgment, and understanding. His immediate goal is to graduate, and he embraced an approach of focusing on the present, believing that future goals will become clear after current ones are achieved.

Saka highlighted *karma* as the initial concept that drew him to Dharma. He further explained the *Tilakkhana* (Three Characteristics of Existence): *anicca* (impermanence, "*nggak ada yang total*" - nothing is permanent, it changes), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta* (non-self, the understanding that "*kita tuh sebenarnya bukan siapa-siapa gitu loh*" - we are actually nobody). He noted that the concept of *anatta* was particularly challenging for him to grasp.

Discussions between Katresna and Saka revealed further shared understandings, building upon the themes from the first workshop. Saka confirmed that the understanding of death in Buddhism as a continuous cycle of birth and rebirth, rather than an end, is a common and accepted perspective that helps to reduce fear. He emphasized accepting this as a general matter. Katresna reflected that his understanding of Dharma, particularly after speaking with Saka, provides a sense of free will, enabling him to discern what actions to pursue and what to let go of. Saka acknowledged the inherent struggle for artists to seek validation and acceptance for their work, recognizing it as a battle against ego. Katresna and Saka discussed *samsara* as a continuous cycle of suffering and rebirth. Katresna shared how being marginalized in the art scene for seven years in his previous city fueled his determination to

find new opportunities, ultimately leading him to Yogyakarta and international projects, demonstrating how suffering can be a catalyst for growth. Saka, conversely, shared his experience of being based in Yogyakarta, where resources are abundant, but finding motivation through interaction with "*perantau-perantau kayak kamu semua gitu*" (migrants like all of you).

Table 2. 6 words poetry of Katresna, Pangastuti, Hidalgo, and Saka.

Katresna	Pangastuti	Hidalgo	Saka
This is the path of flows	Anak-kecil Seroja Perubahan Karma Selaras Bahagia *(English translation)* *Little child* *Lotus flower* *Change* *Karma* *Harmonius* *Happy*	Matahari ungu Gelap-terang Petualangan anicca *(English translation)* *Purple sun* *Dark-light* *Adventure* *Anicca*	Oalah… Okelah… Yaudah… Namanya juga berproses *(English translation)* *Oh, okay then... Well, that's just part of the process.*

A significant tangent emerged regarding the perception of art in Indonesia. Saka asserted that in Indonesia, "*seni itu sebagai hiburan*" (art is seen as entertainment), rather than a form of knowledge or academic study. Katresna noted that this perspective is strongly criticized within his academic program, arguing that the separation of art from knowledge stems from colonial influences that divorced religion from culture. Katresna shared a personal journey of self-acceptance, particularly after a diagnosis of autism, which led to a deeper understanding and acceptance of himself and his background. Saka, similarly, described a realization in 2023 that his income derived more from practical skills, such as teaching and selling traditional herbal drinks (*jamu*), rather than solely from music. This acceptance allowed him to embrace his inherited inclination towards teaching, stating that his art now "*mewarnai*" (colors) his life rather than solely sustaining it.

Katresna recounted recent vivid dreams, including one of a "*serigala hitam pakai jubah*" (black wolf in a robe) amidst blooming flowers. He interpreted this dream using an AI tool, which suggested the wolf symbolized his "*kuat dan mandiri*" (strong and independent) self, while the robe represented wisdom, and the blooming flowers, "*aliran pikiranmu. Ide-ide yang muncul dan kamu pahami sekarang*" (the flow of your thoughts. Ideas that emerge and you understand now). Saka, from a simple Buddhist perspective, viewed dreams as "*bunga tidur*" (sleep flowers), reflecting daily thoughts and experiences. However, he also suggested that the individual is the best interpreter of their own dreams, as they reflect inner states and accumulated references. Saka mentioned the concept of "*benih Budha*" (Buddha-nature or *Tathāgatagarbha*), highlighting that "*Manusia itu punya benih Budha*" (Humans have the seed of Buddha), meaning everyone possesses the potential for awakening or consciousness, each according to their own capacity. Saka further elaborated on *avidya* (ignorance), which he described as the root of suffering, stemming from a refusal "*tidak mengakui, tidak mengetahui, tidak mau menerima*" (not to acknowledge, not to know, not to accept). Katresna connected this to his own seven-year process of moving from not knowing to acknowledging his autistic identity.

Artistic Roles and Decisions

The meeting concluded with a discussion of practical arrangements for future activities, including the production of *jamu* (traditional herbal drinks) for the upcoming performance. The artistic roles and

decisions for the performance were also discussed. Katresna proposed offering his "theatrical body" as a medium for performance. Hidalgo expressed his desire to use throat singing and potentially read a sutra. Pangastuti was envisioned to perform *pelog* (Javanese musical scale) with singing, while Saka would handle improvisational piano. We acknowledged our familiarity with each other's artistic styles, with saka stating, "*Udah kebayang, udah pernah main sama mereka. Tahu aku sifat-sifat mereka*" (Already imagined, already played with them. I know their characteristics). The responsibility for musical arrangements was largely left to the musicians, with Katresna focusing on responding through his physical performance. The intention was for the performance to be a co-creation, reflecting their shared process and insights.

Key Themes of the 1st Workshop

After two separate meetings for the first workshop, several key themes emerged from the discussions with Katresna, Pangastuti, Hidalgo, and Saka. These themes highlight the deeply personal and interconnected ways in which the participants perceive and engage with Buddha Dharma through artistic expression.

Personal Journeys and Connection to Buddha Dharma

We, including a Buddhist artist (Pangastuti), a performing arts doctoral student (Hidalgo), the lead researcher (Katresna), and a musician (Saka), each found deeply personal connections to Buddha Dharma. Our diverse journeys highlight how Buddhist teachings offer comfort, answers to contemporary issues, a focus on the present, and a tool for personal growth, often intertwining with their artistic paths.

Intersection of Buddhism and Artistic Expression

A significant theme is the exploration of how Buddhist principles influence and challenge artistic creation:

1. The Nature of "Buddhist Art": There's a discussion about what defines Buddhist art and the ego involved in artistic creation. Artists often seek validation and acceptance, which can be a struggle when creating "Buddhist" art, as it challenges the ego. Viki articulated this dilemma, suggesting that when artists overtly showcase Buddhism, "*yang kita pamerkan itu bukan ajaran Sang Buddha tapi diri kita*" (what we perform is not the Buddha's teachings but ourselves). It is noted that there are few overt Buddhist rock bands or popular music compared to other religions, leading to a desire for a distinct Buddhist artistic identity.
2. Art as a Path to Dharma and Self-discovery: Art is seen to learn Dharma and understand oneself, sometimes described by Gutami as collecting "*potongan-potongan puzzle itu semakin banyak, semakin, semakin lengkap*" (more and more puzzle pieces, becoming more complete) of one's journey. The project aims to make art resonate with the audience, like a "gong" that creates "*vibrasi yang diharapkan bisa menular ke audience*" (vibrations that are hoped to spread to the audience) and encourages reflection.
3. Artistic Vision for the Project: The co-creation aspect leads to diverse artistic contributions. Hidalgo expressed his desire to use "*suara tenggorokan*" (throat singing) and potentially read a sutra. Pangastuti's singing style is envisioned to be contemporary *pelog* (Javanese musical scale). Saka would handle improvisational piano. Katresna proposed offering his "theatrical body" as a medium for performance. We acknowledged our familiarity with each other's artistic styles. The aim is for the work to reflect the teachings of Buddha without explicitly stating "Buddhism".

Key Buddhist Concepts

Several core Buddhist concepts are discussed and related to personal experiences.

1. *Anicca* (Impermanence): This concept, meaning "change" or "not eternal," is frequently mentioned as a central idea. It is linked to letting go and accepting the flow of life, as expressed by Pangastuti: "*nggak papa ini semua pasti akan berubah nggak papa yang sudah tidak total*"

(it's okay, all of this will definitely change, it's okay, what is not total). Hidalgo's poem also included "*anicca*", connecting it to the need to "*melepas*" (let go).

2. *Dukkha* (Suffering): Suffering is acknowledged as a "*siklus derita*" (cycle of misery) or "*samsara*" that can also serve as practice or training. Katresna notably mentioned "suffering preservation," stating, "*derita itu saya jaga*" (I preserve that suffering), implying that for some, maintaining certain types of suffering can help them endure and continue living.
3. *Anatta* (Non-self): Defined as "*tanpa aku*" (without self) or "*tanpa unsur*" (without element), emphasizing that individuals are nobody in the grand scheme and that many experiences are not solely due to personal choices but external factors. Saka noted that "*memahami Anatta itu lama juga*" (understanding Anatta took a long time) for him.
4. *Karma*: Discussed in terms of good and bad actions, and its impact on future existence. Pangastuti mentioned seeking to "*bikin karma baik yuk biar terlahir lebih bahagia*" (let's make good karma so we can be reborn happier). Hidalgo even suggested that "*party itu ada karma yang baik*" (partying has good karma) if it brings happiness to others.
5. Death and Rebirth: Death is viewed not as an end but as a certainty and a new beginning within a cycle, leading to a lack of fear of death among Buddhists. As Saka explained, "*Kematian, kelahiran, kejedaan. Berarti umum. Bukan takdir, tapi ya itu*" (Death, birth, stillness. That means it's common. Not fate, but that's just how it is). This contrasts with other religions where death is often seen as the ultimate end.
6. Middle Path: The Buddha Dharma offers a "*jalan tengah*" (middle path), encouraging individuals to be observers, release personal desires, and act without attachment.

Challenges and Perceptions of Art and Buddhism in Indonesia

We highlight specific challenges and cultural perceptions within Indonesia regarding art and Buddhism:

1. Art as Entertainment vs. Knowledge: There is a strong sentiment that in Indonesia, "*seni itu sebagai hiburan*" (art is seen as entertainment), or ritual, rather than a form of knowledge or a subject for rigorous academic research. This poses a challenge for researchers like Katresna who are trying to apply methodologies like "Practice as Research" (PAR) to the arts. Saka articulated that "*di Indonesia, seni itu bukan pengetahuan*" (in Indonesia, art is not knowledge).
2. Misinterpretations of Buddhism: It is noted that due to its openness, Buddhism can be interpreted and presented superficially by some artists, especially in the West, which may lead to misunderstandings of its authentic teachings. Hidalgo observed, "*Banyak seniman terutama Amerika Serikat, Eropa, mereka itu angkat Buddhisme, sesuka mereka. Mereka itu ambil ajaran sesuka mereka, menafsirkan ajaran itu sesuka mereka dan akhirnya jadi Buddhisme banyak orang pikir kalau itu mungkin dengan memahami Buddhisme dengan makna yang jelas agak jauh dari yang asli*" (Many artists, especially in the United States, Europe, they take up Buddhism as they please. They take teachings as they please, interpret those teachings as they please, and in the end, many people think that by understanding Buddhism with a clear meaning, it's quite far from the original).
3. Artist's Dilemmas: Artists in Indonesia may face rejection or feel ostracized if their artistic approach doesn't conform to traditional expectations, but this can also fuel their creativity and lead to new opportunities. Katresna described how this marginalization "*bikin semangat terus*" (kept him motivated).

The "Practice as Research" (PAR) Project

The overarching framework of the meetings is a "Practice as Research" project, which is a significant methodological theme:

1. Methodology: The project involves a continuous cycle of discussing, creating artistic work, reflecting on the experience, relating it to academic references, and then repeating the

process. This iterative approach aims to deepen understanding of Dharma through creative practice.

2. Significance: The goal is to publish the research, potentially making it the first of its kind in Indonesia to formally document and publish "Practice as Research" in the arts, thereby strengthening the academic foundation for such studies.
3. Collaborative and Future-Oriented: The project emphasizes co-creation among the artists, with plans for a public performance in May 2025 and a potential festival participation in Singapore in October 2025, demonstrating an ambition to integrate art and Dharma on a larger scale. The discussion also includes practicalities like event logistics, documentation, and the provision of traditional *jamu* for the event.

Technical Consultation with Paradance (May 3rd, 2025)

On May 3rd, 2025, before the second workshop meeting, a technical consultation was held between Katresna, and the organizer of the Paradance platform, a dance festival platform based in Balai Budaya Minomartani. This meeting was crucial for planning the "Moving with Dharma" performance, scheduled for May 17th, 2025.

The primary focus of the discussion was the "Terms of Reference: Moving with Dharma Performance Art Event". This document outlined the event as a collaboration between the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) and Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies (ICRS) at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Paradance, Balai Budaya Minomartani, and their partners. The ToR clarified that the event served as a final examination for the "Buddhism in Modern Asia" course and a group research project for the "Interreligious Dialogue" course at CRCS UGM, aiming to use artistic expression to foster understanding of Buddhist teachings beyond Buddhist communities.

The ToR detailed the event's objective: to showcase a co-creative artistic exploration of Buddhist teachings in contemporary Indonesia, build a space for interreligious engagement through art, promote practice-based Dharma understanding, and demonstrate contemporary Buddhism in Indonesia. Key targets included presenting the performance at Balai Budaya Minomartani, enabling CRCS UGM students to share their research, encouraging interreligious discussion, and exploring co-creation and Practice as Research (PaR) methods.

Logistical details in the ToR covered the event title ("Moving with Dharma"), date (May 17th, 2025), time (19.00 - 21.00 WIB), and location (Balai Budaya Minomartani), confirming CRCS UGM and Paradancer as main organizers. The program included an opening, a course introduction, the main performance, a discussion/Q&A, and closing remarks. The target audience encompassed students, lecturers, Paradancer members, and individuals interested in interreligious dialogue and contemporary art. Expected outcomes included enhanced Dharma understanding, meaningful interreligious engagement, and documentation of art's role in interreligious dialogue. The ToR also listed all parties involved.

During the consultation, practical aspects were solidified. Paradance confirmed their handling of the technical platform and documentation. The production team would provide jamu. A promotional poster was deemed necessary, with content collaboration planned across various platforms. Consumption costs were to be discussed with the CRCS head. Paradance also proposed a dress rehearsal on Friday night before the event. This meeting ensured that all technical and logistical elements were aligned with the ToR for a successful performance.

Event Poster Creation

Following the technical meeting with Paradance, Katresna contacted colleagues from the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) for assistance in poster development. The poster was a collaborative effort among three individuals, including Katresna, and was supervised by two people: one colleague from CRCS and one CRCS administrator. The poster underwent multiple revisions before its final publication on May 8, 2025, and was subsequently posted on Instagram. Katresna's contribution included drafting captions accessible to visually impaired individuals.

Image 2. First page of the "Moving with Dharma" Event Poster.

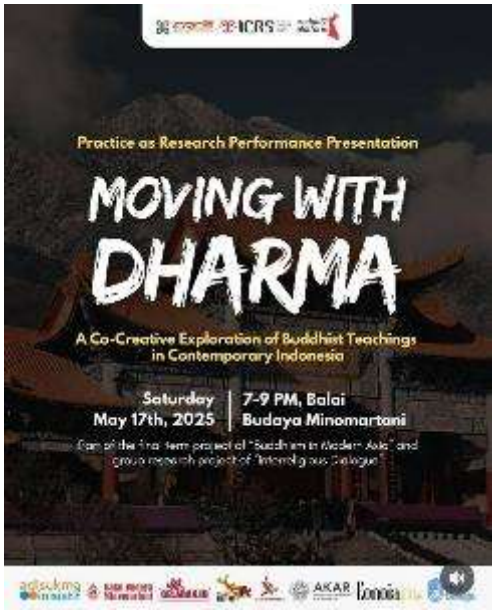


Image 3. Second page of the "Moving with Dharma" Event Poster.



Caption of the poster:

Experience "Moving with Dharma," a unique practice as research performance that creatively explores Buddhist teachings in the context of contemporary Indonesia. This event blends music and dance to offer new perspectives on Dharma.

Happening on Saturday, May 17th, 2025, from 7 to 9 PM WIB at Balai Budaya Minomartani.

Witness the talents of performers M Rhaka Katresna (CRCS UGM), Victorhugo Hidalgo (Gnayaw Puppet), Gutami Hayu Pangastuti (Independent Researcher-Artist), and Sakasatiya (Music Presentation, ISI Yogyakarta). The evening will be guided by MC Afkar Aristoteles M (CRCS UGM).

The event also includes welcoming remarks by Samsul Maarif (CRCS UGM) and Ahmad Jalidu (Paradance Platform), an introduction to "Buddhism in Modern Asia" by Yulianti (CRCS UGM), and a discussion moderated by Ayu Erviana (CRCS UGM) with responders Nia Agustina (Paradance Platform) and Rahmad Setyoko (ICRS UGM).

This presentation is a collaboration between CRCS UGM, ICRS, and Paradance Platform, and is part of the final term project for "Buddhism in Modern Asia" and a group research project on "Interreligious Dialogue."
MovingWithDharma #BuddhistTeachings #ContemporaryIndonesia #MusicAndDance #PerformanceArt #DharmaDiscussion #BalaiBudayaMinomartani #YogyakartaEvents #AcademicResearch #ArtAndSpirituality

2nd Workshop: Daundala Awicarita

The second workshop, held on May 10, served as a pivotal session for self-reflection and engagement with the concept of Dharma, co-organized by Katresna and Daundala Awicarita. The participants included Katresna, Saka, and other members of the Interreligious Dialogue Research Team. The workshop aimed to facilitate personal reflection through artistic expression, specifically the creation of "Daun Dala" (leaf mandalas), while integrating Buddhist philosophical concepts.

Opening and Introduction to Dharma

The session began with introductions, allowing participants to share their names and origins. Katresna, one of the organizers, set the tone: "*Selamat datang di sesi latihan. Jadi ini sebenarnya awalnya mau dibikin untuk momen untuk refleksi dharma ya dan juga self gitu. Jadi ini jadi ruang buat kita engage langsung sama mas Saka*." (Welcome to this practice session. So, this was initially intended to be a moment for Dharma reflection and self-reflection. This is a space for us to engage directly with Mas Saka.)

Saka introduced the concept of Dharma from a Buddhist perspective, explaining its three main components: *Winaya* (rules), *Suta* (wise words), and *Abhidharma* (experiential wisdom). He particularly highlighted the concept of *Karma* and the three universal characteristics of existence (*Tilakkhana*): *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta* (non-self). He stated that "from all of it, if it's about the Buddha's teachings or Dharma, I can only really explain "bleeding karma." From there, I managed to grasp karma and the three general characteristics: *anicca*, *anatta*, and also… *anicca*… impermanence, *dukkha*… suffering, anatta… non-self. These three general descriptions are present in everyday life. So, until now, I only held onto the benefit of it, *anicca* and *anatta*. This initial explanation laid the theoretical foundation for the subsequent reflective activities.

Reflections on Ego, Death, and the Artistic Path

Katresna then provided an update on previous discussions, noting how participants had shared poems and personal experiences of encountering Buddhism. A recurring theme, particularly from Pangastuti and Hidalgo (who were not present but whose insights were shared), revolved around the "ego" and the challenges faced by artists who view their art as a path of Dharma. They struggled with the societal and religious perceptions of art, and the inherent need for recognition, which seemed to contradict the concept of *anatta* (non-self). Katresna articulated their dilemma: "*Ketika mereka berkarya, ketika mereka sadar berkarya berkesenian itu sebagai jalan Dharma, tapi mereka bergumul. Karena mereka butuh untuk diakui. Berarti ada ego di sana, ada diri di sana. Jadi mereka bertanya-tanya kalau misalkan mereka sesungguh, dengan sungguh-sungguh menciptakan karya dengan sebagai Dharma, sebagai melalui, apa, mengikuti jalan Buddhisme gitu ya. Berarti kan karyanya mungkin tidak ada anata di sana. Mereka menciptakan untuk untuk menciptakan, mereka menciptakannya emang karena gak ada diri gitu maksudnya tanpa diri begitu ya dan itu terwujud dan menjadi pertanyaan berikutnya adalah ketika misalkan karya itu karya itu diciptakan dengan anatta itu bagaimana mereka bisa menganjurkan hidup tanpa mereka tahu kayak apakah karya ini diapresiasi atau tidak apakah mereka bisa hidup dari karya ini atau enggak begitu*." (When they create, when they realize that creating art is a path of Dharma, they struggle. Because they need to be acknowledged. That means there's an ego there, a self there. So, they wonder, if they truly and earnestly create works as Dharma, by following the path of Buddhism, then perhaps there's no *anatta* in their work. They create to create, they create because there is no self, without self, and that manifests. The next question then is, if a work is created

with *anatta*, how can they advocate for a life without knowing if this work will be appreciated or if they can make a living from it?).

Another significant reflection centered on the Buddhist perspective of death as a cycle rather than a terrifying end, contrasting it with other religious interpretations known to the participants. Katresna shared a personal revelation: "*bagi saya sendiri sejujurnya proses ini seperti kelahiran kembali karena ini mengingatkan kembali saya gitu ya soal diri lagi gitu ya jadi mandala studi saya dan juga tesis yang tiba-tiba ganti tapi udah beres gitu dan juga pemulihan proses ini juga menyembuhkan trauma-trauma yang dulu udah kekumpul gitu ya.*" (For me personally, honestly, this process is like a rebirth because it reminds me again about myself. So, my mandala study and thesis, which suddenly changed but is now finished, and this healing process also healed traumas that had accumulated.)

The Daundala Awicarita Activity

A woman Daundala facilitator introduced the "Daundala Awicarita" activity, explaining its origins from her personal journey of healing and self-discovery. She described her background in biology and her affinity for plants, which she often used as a source of peace. The activity involves drawing on veined leaves, combining the words "*daun*" (leaf) and "*mandala*," and "*awicarita*" (storytelling). The Daundala facilitators explained the concept of *Daundala*. She emphasized that the activity was a form of journaling, a continuous process of self-recognition.

The practical application of kinesiology, a science of body movement, was integrated into the session, represented by a "three-part triangle" (*kimiawi*/chemical, *emosional*/emotional, *struktural*/structural). This model, borrowed from kinesiology, emphasizes the interconnectedness of these aspects for optimal bodily function. The act of drawing on fragile leaves was presented as a paradox, requiring carefulness but also acceptance of imperfections, mirroring life's choices and consequences. The *Daundala* facilitators shared, "*Ini ringkih, tapi juga kuat sekali. Dan kita punya pilihan akan mengolah ini seperti apa, merespon ini gitu. Kan kita gak bisa, gak bisa selalu ngatur apa yang terjadi di luar ya. Tapi kita punya pilihan untuk merespon itu seperti apa*." (It's fragile, but also powerful. And we have a choice how to process this, how to respond to it. We can't always control what happens outside. But we have a choice how to respond to it.) The activities of *Daundala Awicarita* include washing the veined leaves, drawing on paper, drawing on veined leaves, and reflection.

Image 4. Participants showed the veined leaves drawing, *Daundala Awicarita*. Taken by workshop participants.



Individual Reflections During the Activity

Participants engaged in drawing on the leaves, leading to diverse individual reflections:

1. Katresna**:** The experience reinforced the idea of free will and taking immediate action when an insight or "push" arises, rather than delaying[17]. They reflected on their own past experiences of prolonged suffering due to hesitation, seeing the process as a rebirth. "*perkataan-perkataan dari mas Satya (Saka) itu berputar di kepala saya sepanjang menggambar dan mengingatkan bahwa saya punya kehendak bebas bahwa ketika itu muncul maka lakukanlah segera jadi yang muncul bagi saya ketika memahami Dharma adalah salah satunya adalah ya ketika emang dorongannya untuk muncul ya lakukan gitu daripada menunda sampai setahun lebih gitu*." (The words of mas Satya (Saka) kept spinning in my head throughout the drawing, reminding me that I have free will, that when something arises, I should do it immediately. So, what emerged for me in understanding Dharma was, one of them was, if there's an impulse to do it, then do it, rather than delay for over a year.)
2. **A man from Interreligious Dialogue Research Team:** Physical discomfort (back pain, pinched nerve) significantly impacted their ability to focus, illustrating how bodily sensations can interfere with mental clarity and engagement in reflective activities. "*Ini hal yang bikin aku gak konsen. Karena pinggangku sakit gitu kan. Engkel terus ngerambang kesini. Jadi, segala macam kehidupan, tugas, dan lain-lain...literatur minggu ini. Jadi pas aku coba gimana caranya, harus fokus menuruti apa yang ada di otakku untuk menggambar, ternyata gua bisa. Faktornya mungkin ini ya, karena nyaman apa enggaknya saat menggambar. Jadi itu. Nah kalau aku menggambar kayak gini, aku refleksikan sarap tadi. Jujur lah itu syaraf.*" (This is what makes me not concentrate. Because my back hurts. Ankle and then it spreads here. So, all kinds of life, tasks, and so on...this week's literature. So, when I tried how to, I had to focus on following what was in my brain to draw, it turns out I couldn't. The factor might be this, whether I'm comfortable or not while drawing. So that's it. Now when I draw like this, I reflect on my nerves. Honestly, it's my nerve.)
3. **A woman from Interreligious Dialogue Research Team:** Initially aiming for simplicity by tracing the leaf's outline, she found the process surprisingly draining: "*Tapi yang makanya tadi saya tanya di Mbak, bahwa saya rasa capek sekali ketika menggambar. Padahal menurut saya ini supaya tidak ribet, simple, tapi ternyata menguras banyak energi dalam diri saya, saya tidak tahu kenapa itu. Atau mungkin karena pikiran saya yang masih kemana-mana, jadi mengerjakan hal yang simple saja saya rasa capek*." (But that's why I asked earlier, that I felt very tired when drawing. Even though I thought this was to be simple, it turned out to drain a lot of energy from me, I don't know why. Because my mind was still wandering, doing something simple made me feel tired.) This highlights the unexpected physical and mental exertion involved in seemingly simple introspective tasks.
4. **A woman from Interreligious Dialogue Research Team:** Expressed feelings of panic, particularly when facing the open-ended nature of the task. This was linked to real-life experiences of deadline anxiety. "*Mungkin panik ketika deadline dan lain-lain, ya. Mungkin seperti itu. Ya, akhirnya saya mengadari. Ngapain panik? Usahakan gambar yang lebih stabil lagi. Mungkin itu perjalanan juga sih, refleksi saya.*" (Perhaps panic when facing deadlines and so on. Maybe like that. Well, finally I realized. Why panic? Try to draw something more stable. Perhaps that's also my journey, my reflection.) This shows a direct correlation between the micro-experience of the workshop and broader life challenges.

Key Themes of the Meeting

1. *Dharma* as a Lived Experience: The workshop moved beyond theoretical understanding of *Dharma* to its practical application in daily life, especially concerning concepts like karma, *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anatta*. Participants grappled with how these principles intersect with personal experiences, such as artistic endeavors and the perception of death.
2. Self-Reflection and Inner Journey: The *Daundala Awicarita* activity served as a powerful tool for inward reflection. The act of drawing on leaves, observing one's reactions, and confronting

mental blocks became a metaphor for understanding the self, emotional states, and the impact of external pressures.

3. The Paradox of Control and Acceptance: The fragility of the leaves and the unexpected challenges of drawing on them symbolize life's inherent paradoxes. Participants learned to navigate the tension between wanting control (e.g., a perfect drawing) and accepting what arises (e.g., a torn leaf), reflecting a broader lesson in responding to life's unpredictable nature.
4. Healing and Personal Transformation: For several participants, the workshop was a deeply personal and healing experience, described by Katresna as a "rebirth". The process helped individuals confront past traumas, understand their own patterns of attachment, and find new pathways for self-expression and well-being.
5. Interconnectedness and Shared Humanity: Despite individual journeys, the shared experience fostered a sense of connection[35]. The workshop emphasized that personal struggles and insights, when shared, can resonate with others, creating a supportive space for collective growth. The *Daundala* facilitators highlighted the reciprocal nature of sharing and receiving insights.

In conclusion, the second workshop was an immersive experience that utilized artistic creation as a medium for profound self-discovery and the integration of Dharma into personal narratives. The direct engagement with the *Daundala Awicarita* provided tangible insights into abstract philosophical concepts, fostering a deeper understanding of self, suffering, impermanence, and the power of conscious choice in navigating life's complexities.

Personal Reflection and Sign Language Interpretation

On May 11, Katresna experienced what he looked out as *Nibbida*, a state of disillusionment with his life experiences. This led to an act of *Viraga*, characterized by him shaving his head, which he interpreted as a rebirth and a release from past negative experiences. This personal liberation also manifested in his efforts to stage the "Moving with Dharma" performance on the Paradance platform, particularly after a previous attempt in 2016 was cancelled.

Furthermore, Katresna actively pursued inclusivity for the "Moving with Dharma" performance by contacting a sign language interpreter. The communication began with Katresna inquiring about the interpreter's availability for the upcoming performance. He expressed his thought that "if there are deaf friends watching... maybe there will be audio description". The interpreter readily agreed to arrange for a volunteer sign language interpreter. Katresna clarified that the initiative was a collaborative effort with no budget, to which the interpreter affirmed her willingness to proceed, stating, "it's okay, let's make your final exam a success". Katresna expressed his gratitude and encouraged her to invite deaf friends to the performance. The interpreter also sought Katresna's input regarding appropriate attire for the performance, asking if it should be formal. Katresna suggested a casual or artsy dress code. This exchange highlights Katresna's commitment to making the performance accessible and inclusive.

Individual Artistic Exercises and Reflections Post-Workshop

Katresna, Saka, Pangastuti, and Hidalgo engaged in individual artistic exercises following the second workshop. This narrative is drawn from Katresna's reflection dated May 14th. It provides insightful perspectives on the intersection of personal spiritual journeys and artistic practice.

Katresna articulated his understanding of the creative process within the context of Dharma as a realization of rebirth. His interactions with peers throughout this period served as a constant reminder of his ongoing journey of self-discovery and self-affirmation. Reflecting on his spiritual awakening in 2016, Katresna noted that his current artistic work is fundamentally about achieving absolute certainty within himself. This perspective aligns with the idea that the body supports attention and internal work, leading to greater understanding, confidence, and independence, as cited from Blum (2016):

> "When we see that our bodies support where we place attention and how we work with what is arising, we gain more understanding, confidence, and independence. As we become more independent and confident we have more capacity to work with what is arising. This is the ground

from which a way of being fully alive and loving can emerge, one rooted in insight, and in which one is free to choose how to live and be of service in this world.".

For Katresna, his body's alignment with Dharma provides guidance through understanding and life experience. He observed a continuous, periodic enlightenment since 2016, transforming him from a "wayward" state to one of wisdom. Despite facing social exclusion and "cancellation" within the artistic community, Katresna found an alternative space in a neighboring city, where he encountered *Butoh*. This form of expression became a "path full of suffering," yet by embodying this suffering, he discovered a means to live and continue his recovery. However, this alone proved insufficient. Katresna realized that his spiritual needs ultimately necessitated the creation and active contemplation of art, a practice he has now embraced. His current focus is on "Moving with Dharma," prompting him to seek further references on the subject.

Artistic Practice as Collective Meditation and Enlightenment

A shared understanding emerged among the participants that their work in art functioned as a personal meditation practice. This collective endeavor was perceived as a means of bringing forth enlightenment, which was then disseminated through the resulting artworks. This highlights the transformative potential of art not only for individual practitioners but also for its audience.

Diverse Paths within Dharma: Individual Expressions of the Journey

The workshop period underscored the unique and individualized nature of the Dharma path for us:

1. Hidalgo's engagement was characterized by his significant journey to Yogyakarta, signifying a physical and perhaps spiritual pilgrimage in his artistic exploration.
2. Pangastuti actively channeled her spiritual dedication into creating songs for Bhante, demonstrating how creative output could directly serve and express devotional aspects of the Dharma.
3. Saka's journey led him to a practical and community-oriented path, choosing to sell herbal medicine and teach music as a means of sustenance and living in alignment with his pursuit in arts.
4. Katresna's experience, as detailed above, involved navigating personal and professional adversity to find unique avenues for healing and spiritual growth through embodying suffering in his art.

Each participant's journey, while distinct, contributed to a broader understanding that the Dharma path is not always linear or easy, often involving challenges and pain. However, through processes of reflection, interpersonal interaction, and particularly creative expression, participants found their unique avenues for recovery, self-understanding, and a deeply personal embodiment of Dharma. The artistic process itself became an integral component of their spiritual growth and self-discovery.

Organizer Meeting and Event Finalization

An organizer meeting was held online on Thursday, May 15, 2025. During this meeting, it was confirmed that the event poster had been published on May 8, 2025. The meeting was attended by Katresna and five organizers from the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) and the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies (ICRS), including the Master of Ceremonies (MC), moderator, and respondents. The discussions covered technical aspects of the event, including the program rundown, content for the welcoming remarks by CRCS and Paradance Platform, the introduction to "Buddhism in Modern Asia," the nature of the performance, and how the respondents from Paradance and ICRS would witness the performance. The volunteer committee members stated that this would be their first time witnessing a contemporary performance. Katresna clarified that the performance would be like the *Butoh* performance videos he had previously shared in class of “Buddhism in Modern Asia”.

Performance Preparation Meeting

The performance preparation meeting was held on May 16, one day before the performance. The meeting served as a crucial platform for the performers to align artistic vision, technical requirements, and personal reflections about the Dharma Project.

Key Theme: Dharma as a Guiding Principle and Lived Experience

A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to personal reflections from each performer on their journey with Dharma and how it intersected with their artistic practice. This segment revealed profound insights into their understanding of karma, kindness, and self-discovery, setting a contemplative tone for the upcoming performance.

The discussions highlighted how Dharma was not merely a philosophical concept but a deeply integrated aspect of their lives, influencing their perceptions and actions. The lead speaker, Katresna, shared a powerful personal transformation: "*kalau dari aku sih selama proses perenungan tentang Dharma ini dan interaksi dengan teman-teman yang saya catat utamanya adalah ketika hidup dengan Dharma itu hidup dengan seyakin-yakinnnya. Pengalaman dan perasaannya itu belum pernah seyakin ini sebelumnya gitu loh jadi kayak buat aku ini seperti merumas gitu karena untuk hidup seyakin-yakinnnya kembali ke belakang dan maju ke depan. Jadi aku kayak menulis kembali sejarah hidupku dan mulai telah lahir kembali.*" (For me, during the process of contemplating Dharma and interacting with friends, what I noted primarily is that living with Dharma means living with utmost conviction. I've never felt this certain before; for me, it's like a rebirth because to live with such conviction, I had to look back and move forward. So, I feel like I am rewriting my life story and have been reborn.) This quote encapsulates a sense of profound personal renewal and conviction gained through engaging with Dharma.

Pangastuti articulated how her life choices, particularly as an artist, align with Buddhist teachings without being overtly planned, connecting it to the concept of *karma* and "*Punya Sambara*" (power of merit) and "*Nyana Sambara*" (power of knowledge). She emphasized the automatic nature of good deeds stemming from compassion: "*dari punya danyana itu aku jadi punya rasa kepedulian aku jadi punya rasa care sama orang lain dan seterusnya kalau kepedulian dan care itu betul-betul dijalankan perbuatan baik tuh kayak otomatis saja karena kita sudah terbiasa memilih untuk menempuh jalan baik.*" (From merit and knowledge, I developed a sense of compassion and care for others, and so on. If compassion and care are truly practiced, good deeds happen automatically because we are accustomed to choosing the good path.) This reflects a spontaneous, natural alignment with ethical conduct.

Hidalgo simplified his understanding of karma into "*hak dan kewajiban*" (rights and obligations), framing his life experiences through this lens. He stated, "*hal ini ternyata ya merujuknya ke hal apa nih, apa ya merujuknya juga ke karma, tetapi karma tuh ya aku ringkas lagi jadi lebih sempit lagi lebih yang mudah dipahami menurutku adalah hak dan kewajiban gitu.*" (This ultimately refers to karma, but for me, karma is simplified into something easier to understand rights and obligations.) This pragmatic interpretation highlights the reciprocal relationship between actions and their consequences.

Hidalgo's reflection focused on the reciprocal nature of good deeds and opportunities. He shared an anecdote about someone knowing his performance details unexpectedly, leading him to reflect: "*bagaimana jalanku dalam Buddhisme sudah membuka banyak jalan lagi, sudah mau membuat aku mengenal banyak orang, aku sih dapat banyak pengalaman, tapi karena saya percaya Dharma dan Karma dan Vidhika, aku harus melakukan hal yang sama. Artinya, kalau aku dikasih suatu kesempatan untuk ikut atau gabung satu proyek seperti ini, besok walaupun nggak ada yang mewajibkan ini, tapi menurutku sih tugas tugasku adalah menjawab membalas dengan hal yang sama.*" (How my path in Buddhism has opened up many more paths, has made me meet many people, I've gained a lot of experience, but because I believe in *Dharma*, *Karma*, and *Vidhika*, I must do the same. This means that if I'm given an opportunity to participate in or join a project like this, even though no one requires it, I believe my duty

is to reciprocate with the same.) This underscores the cyclical nature of giving and receiving within his Buddhist practice.

Key Theme: Minimalist Approach and Responsive Performance

The meeting also delved into the practical aspects of the performance, including stage setup, musical arrangements, duration, and conceptual elements. The performers discussed a minimalist setup and a responsive approach to the 30-minute performance. Pangastuti suggested using incense to create an ambiance at the beginning and expressed a willingness to improvise with the music: "*Kalau aku karena nanti settingnya mungkin minimalis ya, kalau minimalis mungkin mic boleh, tapi kalau nggak ada nggak papa, terus aku sih belum punya pandangan soal musiknya besok gimana kalau memang sudah ada nanti barangkali bisa dikirim masyarakat biar aku ya paling enggak ancang-ancang lah latihan walaupun besok itu realitanya aku berpikir untuk lebih merespon dari teman-teman aja jadi kayak semacam improv gitu.*" (As for me, since the setting will likely be minimalist, a mic is fine, but if not, that's okay. I don't have a view on tomorrow's music yet. If it's ready, perhaps you can send it so I can at least prepare and practice, though in reality, I plan to respond more to the others, a kind of improvisation.)

The idea of using traditional Indonesian musical scales (pelog) and maintaining a continuous, evolving soundscape was also explored. Hidalgo suggested, "*Oke bisa sih misalnya Saka menciptakan ambient terus di ambient itu aku bisa aku sih rencananya nyanyi tapi nggak sampai banyak nada gitu lebih ke nyanyianku lebih ke seperti berdoa atau lebih flat gitu jadi bisa mendukung ambience nya terus dari itu semua atas itu Pangastuti bisa nyanyi gitu loh terus Pangastuti kan pakai dinamik gitu loh terus biar kita nggak nabrak gitu loh nada-nada gitu.*" (Okay, it's possible, for example, Saka creates an ambiance, and within that ambiance, I can sing, but not with many notes, more like praying or flat, so it can support the ambiance, and on top of that, Pangastuti can sing with dynamics, so we don't clash with notes.) This highlights the collaborative and improvisational nature of their musical synergy.

Katresna revealed his intention to use body painting and shave his head as part of the performance, symbolizing a "rebirth" or "death" of the old self, inspired by *Butoh* dance. He stated, "*Jadi, aku nanti akan dipainting seluruh tubuh putih dan ini rambutku yang udah tumbuh sedikit ini akan dicukur lagi sampai botak. Jadi putih, putih semua. Jadi mungkin kayak mati gitu. Ya mungkin itu proses yang beberapa bhikkhu dan bhikkhuni juga melewati sih.*" (So, I will be body-painted entirely white, and this little bit of hair that has grown back will be shaved off again until I'm bald. So, white, all white. So perhaps it's like death. Yes, maybe it's a process that some *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* also go through.) This artistic choice underscores the deep personal and spiritual themes embedded in the performance.

We also wrote the synopsis of the performance:

Perjalanan Dharma dari empat orang yang bersinggungan, mencari melalui bumi dan hiruk pikuk pencarian diri. Dari refleksi tentang karma - kebaikan senantiasa dikembalikan pada semesta. Dengan upaya yang tiada hentinya, bagai roda dharma yang berputar - mewujud langkah hidup dengan seyakin-yakinnya. (The Dharma journey of four interconnected people, searching through the earth and the hustle of self-discovery. This comes from reflecting on karma, that goodness is always returned by the universe. With tireless effort, like the spinning Dharma wheel, they manifest their life path with complete conviction.)

Key Theme: Research Integration and Audience Experience

Practical arrangements, such as interview schedules for other research purposes and audience expectations, were also covered. The meeting addressed the other research team's need to interview us before or after the show. Schedules were adjusted to accommodate the performers' availability, emphasizing the integration of academic research with artistic endeavor. Katresna suggested that it seems most comfortable for friends to be interviewed before the performance, as after, they might want to tidy up, remove makeup, or be tired, and time is also limited.

A unique aspect of Katresna's performances was highlighted: the visceral emotional reactions of the audience, including instances of vomiting or crying. He expressed, "*Jadi aku pengalaman itu ketika aku pentas itu penonton tuh muntah. ... Ya karena aku ngerasa emosi yang kuat banget dan itu yang bikin (seseorang) muntah gitu jadi aku ngerasa apa namanya emosi yang terpendam di diri (seseorang) tuh keluar bersamaan dengan muntah.*" (So, my experience when I perform is that the audience vomits. ... Yes, because I feel such strong emotions, and that makes someone vomit. So, I feel like the suppressed emotions within a person come out along with the vomit.) This phenomenon led to a decision to inform the audience via the MC about potential intense emotional responses and to encourage self-care, such as stepping out or drinking water if needed. This proactive approach underscores a commitment to audience well-being despite the intensity of the artistic expression.

The Day of the Performance: May 17, 2025

The performance, titled "Moving with Dharma," was held on May 17, 2025, at Balai Budaya Minomartani, as outlined in the "Terms of Reference Moving with Dharma" document. The event commenced at 7:00 PM WIB and concluded at 9:00 PM WIB. A total of 34 participants attended the event, including three deaf individuals, emphasizing the inclusive nature of artistic exploration.

Rundown of the Event

The event followed a structured rundown to facilitate a smooth flow and engaging experience for the audience. The program began at 7:00 PM with an Opening by MC, where Afkar Aristoteles Mukhaer set the welcoming tone for the audience. This was followed by Welcoming Remarks from a Representative of Paradance (7:10 - 7:20 PM) and a Representative of CRCS UGM (7:20 - 7:30 PM), both extending their welcome and providing an organizational overview. From 7:30 - 7:45 PM, Buddhism studies lecture gave an Introduction: Buddhism in Modern Asia, offering a brief introduction to the course and setting the academic context. The Main Performance: Moving with Dharma was presented by the "Moving with Dharma" team from 7:45 - 8:15 PM, lasting 30 minutes. Following the performance, an interactive Discussion Session, Interactive Segment, and Q&A took place from 8:15 - 8:45 PM, moderated by a moderator and responder from ICRS and Paradance platform, fostering meaningful dialogue. The event concluded with Concluding Remarks and Closing from 8:45 - 9:00 PM, summarizing the event and expressing gratitude.

Image 5. MC opening the event. Taken by Paradance Platform.



Pre-Performance Adjustments and Dramaturgy

Before the main performance, significant adjustments were made to the stage and dramaturgy. The dramaturgy, which is the composition and arrangement of a play or performance, was developed immediately before the show. These on-the-spot decisions were crucial for the fluidity and symbolic depth of the performance. Key decisions included:

1. Technical Arrangements: Technical arrangements were decided upon before the performance, including the specific placement of musical instruments on stage. Crucially, the positioning of the two sign language interpreters on the left side of the stage was also finalized to ensure optimal visibility for the deaf audience. Furthermore, a deliberate decision was made to include the sign language interpreters in the documentation video of the performance, reinforcing the commitment to accessibility and inclusivity beyond the live event.

Image 6. Sign language interpreter standing on the left side of the stage. Taken by Paradance platform. Taken by Paradance Platform.



Image 7. Both Hidalgo and Pangastuti sat in the middle-right of the stage while Katresna roamed the stage. Taken by Paradance Platform.



Image 8. Saka stood with keyboard on the right side of the stage while looking at Hidalgo and Pangastuti. Taken by Paradance Platform.



2. Sign Language Interpretation: Two sign language interpreters were positioned on the left side of the stage. The two sign language interpreters alternated in their interpretation, ensuring continuous access for the deaf audience members who were seated in proximity to them for optimal visibility. Katresna provided specific guidance to the interpreters on how to best interpret musical and sound elements into sign language, facilitating a more inclusive experience for the deaf audience.
3. Pangastuti's Pradaksina with Incense: Pangastuti initiated the performance by performing a *pradaksina* (circumambulation in a clockwise direction, often done around sacred objects or spaces as a mark of respect) while carrying incense. This served as an opening ritual, symbolizing purification and creating a contemplative atmosphere. The three incense sticks symbolized the Triple Gem: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Image 9. Pangastuti's Pradaksina with incense.



4. Katresna's Follow-up with *Butoh*: Katresna followed Pangastuti, also performing pradaksina, but integrated *butoh* actions, adding a dynamic and interpretive layer to the ritual.

Image 10. Katresna was doing *Pradaksina*. Taken by Paradance Platform.



5. Musical Composition: The musical composition was a collaborative effort among Pangastuti, Hidalgo, and Saka, ensuring a cohesive auditory experience that complemented the visual and performative elements.
6. Concluding Anjali by Katresna: The performance concluded with an *Anjali mudra* (a gesture of reverence and respect) by Katresna. This gesture, often used in Buddhist and Hindu traditions, provided a serene and respectful close to the artistic presentation.

Image 11. Katresna, Hidalgo, Pangastuti, and Sign language interpreter were doing Anjali Mudra to close the performance. Taken by Paradance Platform.



Key Themes from the Discussion Session

The discussion session following the performance revealed several profound themes explored by the performers, responders, and audience:

1. Practice as Research (PaR) and Embodiment: Katresna, a performer, emphasized the "Practice as Research" (PaR) methodology, highlighting the iterative and reflective nature of their artistic process: "*Intinya menjalani hidup dengan seyakin-yakinnya. Gitu. Jadi ini, eh, karyanya dilaluin melalui proses practice as research. Jadi, setiap jumpa perjumpaan dengan tiga sahabat saya di sini. Itu melalui proses yang refleksi yang berulang-ulang.*" (The essence is living life with conviction. So, this work was done through a practice-as-research process. Every encounter with my three friends here involved a repetitive reflection process.) This highlights the performers' deep engagement with the Dharma through their physical and emotional experiences. The Artistic Director of Paradance Platform further elaborated on the concept of embodiment, asserting that understanding one's own body, including traumas and joys, is crucial for an artist to connect with the audience. She stated, "*Bagaimana kamu, eeeh, apa namanya, bisa terhu--menghubungkan ini dengan penonton kalau kamu tidak terhubung dengan dirimu sendiri, kamu tidak terhubung dengan apa yang kamu bicarakan*." (How can you, um, connect this with the audience if you are not connected with yourself, you are not connected with what you are talking about)
2. Dharma as "Everything" and Flexibility: The Buddhist responder offered a broad definition of Dharma, stating, "*Bahwasanya teman-teman Dharma itu adalah everything. Ini mengutip (a lecturer's name). Everything is Dharma. Apapun itu adalah Dharma, karena Dharma adalah segala sesuatu yang ada.*" (Friends, Dharma is everything. Quoting (a lecturer's name): Everything is Dharma. Whatever it is, it is Dharma, because Dharma is everything that exists.) This inclusive understanding suggests that Dharma is not limited to Buddhist teachings but encompasses all existing phenomena. Saka, echoed this, stating that Dharma is flexible and can be understood and accepted everywhere, even through artistic expression.
3. Meditation and Freedom of Thought in Music: Hidalgo discussed the concept of meditation in his musical contribution, aiming to dispel misconceptions and emphasize freeing the mind. He noted, "*Banyak orang, di, um, ada pikiran yang agak keliru tentang meditasi karena di-bisnisman ditanya, 'Kalau meditasi nanti bisa kesurupan nggak?*'" (Many people have a slightly mistaken idea about meditation because businessmen ask, 'If I meditate, can I get possessed?') He explained that the music aimed to bring a sense of freedom, allowing thoughts to flow without restriction, which aligns with certain Buddhist meditative practices.
4. Buddhist Symbolism in the Performance: The discussion session following the performance delved into the rich symbolism embedded within the performance, highlighting its profound connection to Buddhist teachings:
    - Ritual Elements: The deliberate use of three incense sticks, the performance of *pradaksina*, and specific *mudras* (hand gestures like Anjali) were meticulously explained by the Buddhist responder. These elements directly symbolize core Buddhist concepts such as the Triratna (Triple Gem: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) and the practice of showing reverence. Katresna explained the meaning of Anjali: "*Kalau tadi Anjali biasanya dipakai ketika, apa namanya, memberikan semacam penghormatan pada Buddha kepada para venerable*, *begitu ya*." (Anjali is usually used when, what is it, giving a form of respect to the Buddha, to the venerable ones.)
    - Mantra and Vibration: The deep vocalizations and chants, specifically mantras like "*Om tare tutare ture soha*," were identified as significant Buddhist elements. Hidalgo clarified the meaning behind these mantras, noting, "*Mantera itu memberikan kita berkat berdasarkan sedikit mantera misalnya salah satu mantera yang saya memakai itu Om tare tutare ture soha supaya kita diberikan kesehatan.*" (Mantras give us blessings based on small mantras, for example, one mantra I used was Om tare tutare ture soha so that we

are given health.) The use of low, stomach-sourced sounds was linked to Tantric Buddhism, aiming to create vibrations that resonate throughout the body, fostering a sense of unity and deep spiritual engagement beyond mere auditory perception.

- Dharma as Path and Purpose: The overall performance was seen as an embodiment of the "Moving with Dharma" concept. The actions, symbols, and musical elements were presented as pathways to understanding Buddhist teachings in a contemporary Indonesian context. This includes the subtle references to *Upaya Kausalya* (skillful means), demonstrating how artistic expression can serve as an accessible method for introducing Dharma to a diverse audience.

5. Struggle with Suffering (Duka) and Embracing Reality: The Buddhist responder eloquently connected Katresna's complex movements, including physically engaging with the floor, to the Buddhist concept of *duka* (suffering). He stated, "*Itu adalah perwujudan bagaimana kita manusia ini hidup struggle with suffering. Bergelut dengan derita dan Dharma yang diajarkan Buddha, empat ajaran mulia pertama yang diajarkan Buddha semua adalah tentang duka, tentang penderitaan dan bagaimana cara mengakhiri.*" (That is the embodiment of how we humans live, struggling with suffering. Grappling with pain and the Dharma taught by Buddha; the first four noble truths taught by Buddha are all about *duka*, about suffering, and how to end it.) This theme emphasized the need to acknowledge and embrace suffering as an inherent part of existence, rather than resisting it. The discussion concluded with a powerful message about releasing suffering through mindfulness and embodying Dharma throughout one's life.
6. Inclusivity and Deaf Audience Engagement: The presence and participation of deaf audience members highlighted the efforts towards inclusivity. One deaf participant expressed their appreciation for the performance, noting a "*gejolak dalam diri*" (turmoil within) and a subsequent feeling of calm during the meditation segment, even experiencing emotional release through the interpretation. Another deaf participant raised important questions about how musical vibrations and prayers were interpreted into sign language, observing that the interpreter seemed to be signing "like a song." This feedback led to a deeper explanation by Hidalgo, who clarified the physical and spiritual impact of the low-frequency sounds and mantras, emphasizing that "*vibrasinya itu tidak hanya tidak hanya mendengar tapi kita merasakan di seluruh tubuh*" (the vibrations are not just heard but felt throughout the body). This interaction underscored the unique ways in which deaf individuals engaged with the performance and the critical role of accessible interpretation in fostering a comprehensive understanding of artistic and spiritual concepts.

Image 12. Deaf audience responded to the performance. Taken by Paradance Platform.



Image 13. One of the sign language interpreter summarized the response of the deaf audience. Taken by Paradance Platform.



Overall, the discussion session provided a rich landscape of interpretations, highlighting the success of "Moving with Dharma" in fostering interreligious dialogue and deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings through artistic expression. The engagement of both performers and audience members in unpacking the meaning and experience of the performance demonstrated the project's ability to create a new space for meaningful cross-cultural and cross-religious engagement.

Image 14. Group photo after performance.



Performance Recording

The recording of the performance was uploaded on YouTube (Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies et al., 2025) on May 23, 2025. The video setting was set unlisted to prevent public access and plagiarism. The video provided opening of the event until the closing of the event, with sign language interpretation in the bottom right of the screen.

After-Performance Reflection

We continue by presenting a detailed narrative derived from Katresna's reflection on May 23, Saka's reflection on June 6, and a collaborative reflection involving Katresna, Pangastuti, and Hidalgo on June 13, all following a significant performance. The reflections highlight profound personal revelations and their subsequent impact on their understanding of interpersonal dynamics, artistic expression, and personal growth. Key themes emerging from these reflections include the sudden emergence of critical insight, the identification of unhealthy relational patterns, the cyclical nature of detachment and disillusionment, the importance of collaborative decision-making in navigating personal transformation, observations on artistic symbolism and philosophical depth, and considerations of Buddhist ethics in artistic creation and reception.

Narrative of Katresna's Reflection (May 23)

Katresna's reflection begins with a striking description of an abrupt "pencerahan mendadak" (sudden enlightenment) that occurred shortly after the performance. This unexpected insight enabled him to critically analyze and understand "batasan yang tidak sehat" (unhealthy boundaries) within a significant relationship. The experience was not isolated but was recognized as part of a recurring pattern, as Katresna noted: *"Aku menyadari diriku mengalami beberapa kali siklus Nibbida dan Viraga."* (I realized I experienced several cycles of *Nibbida* and *Viraga*.) This suggests a process of detachment and disillusionment, followed by re-engagement or a new understanding.

The realization brought about a "perubahan signifikan" (significant change) for Katresna, which he acknowledged had a substantial interpersonal impact. The process of arriving at this understanding was not instantaneous or without challenge; he reported undergoing a *"proses konflik sekitar tiga hari untuk memahami dinamikanya."* (Conflict process of about three days to understand its dynamics.) During this period of introspection and conflict, Katresna was able to discern a repeating pattern in his experiences: *"Kemudian aku memahami pola-pola yang sama terjadi sebelumnya, secara berulang."*

(Then I understood the same patterns had occurred before, repeatedly.) This recognition of recurring dynamics underscored the depth of his enlightenment.

Despite the intensity of this personal breakthrough, Katresna recognized the necessity of moderation and collaboration in implementing change. He expressed his astonishment at actively experiencing enlightenment: *"Aku takjub untuk menyadari bahwa aku secara aktif mengalami pencerahan."* (I was amazed to realize that I was actively experiencing enlightenment.) However, he also acknowledged a crucial reminder regarding the pace of change: *"Namun aku butuh seseorang untuk mengingatkan aku bahwa perubahan yang baik terjadi secara perlahan – aku perlu melibatkan orang lain dalam pengambilan keputusan."* (However, I needed someone to remind me that good changes happen slowly – I need to involve others in decision-making.) This indicates a critical self-awareness of the need for gradual implementation and shared responsibility in the transformation process.

Narrative of Saka's Reflection (June 6)

Saka's reflection on June 6 focused on the artistic and conceptual aspects of the performance, noting specific elements and suggesting pathways for artistic improvement and deeper philosophical engagement. He paid close attention to the visual dynamics, noting the contrasting attire: *"Pemusik berpakaian hitam, Penari putih."* (Musicians dressed in black, Dancer in white.) This contrast immediately evoked a profound symbolic comparison: *"Seperti yin dan yang."* (Like yin and yang.) This suggests a harmonious yet opposing interplay central to the performance's visual language.

Saka then delved into conceptual illustrations presented by the performance, referring to *"Perenungan - ilustrasi makan minum"* (Contemplation - illustration of eating and drinking). He detailed a sequence: *"Makan, jalan, minum..."* (Eat, walk, drink...) which he connected to a broader philosophical concept: *"Keterkaitan satu sama lain - jalan dharma...." * (Interconnectedness - path of *dharma*....) This highlights an appreciation for how mundane activities can illustrate profound spiritual paths and the interconnectedness of existence.

Furthering his philosophical analysis, Saka explicitly mentioned *"Perenungan tiap hari, tilakana"* (Daily contemplation, *tilakana*), referencing the Buddhist concept of *Ti-lakkhana* (the three characteristics of existence: impermanence, suffering, and non-self). He then described how the performance illustrated suffering: *"Ilustrasi dukkha dengan bentuk Semua gerak sendiri, kacau."* (Illustration of *dukkha* with the form "All move on their own, chaotic.") This pointed to a visual representation of the chaotic and disorganized nature of suffering. He continued by noting *"Ketidakkekalan"* (Impermanence) and the dynamic of *"Berhenti, bergantian"* (Stop, alternate), emphasizing the transient nature of phenomena. Finally, Saka identified the ultimate aim of the performance as an exploration of *Anatta* (non-self), suggesting it acted as *"memberikan cermin kepada penonton."* (giving a mirror to the audience), inviting self-reflection and a deeper understanding of one's own nature.

Narrative of Katresna, Pangastuti, and Hidalgo's Reflection (June 13)

On June 13, a collaborative reflection session involving Katresna, Pangastuti, and Hidalgo explored the ethical considerations of artistic decision-making in relation to Buddhist ethics, alongside the performance's role in conveying fundamental Buddhist concepts.

Katresna articulated key ethical considerations for artistic decisions, based on his role as both producer and performer. This included a significant instance where his "sudden enlightenment (*nibbida*)" led to a change in artistic direction, such as opting for Butoh instead of a choreographed piece due to time and space constraints when the co-authors were not likely to meet and train in person frequently. His considerations focused on:

1. Facilitating meditation, change, and transformation.
2. Integrating *Anatta* (no-self) in artistic decision-making.
3. Embodying compassion in artistic facilitation.

Hidalgo further clarified the performance's primary role, stating: *"Pertunjukkn kita yg nomor 1 Sebagai approaching to basic buddhist concepts through art/performance."* (Our performance, number 1, as an approach to basic Buddhist concepts through art/performance.) This emphasized the direct educational and spiritual aim of artistic endeavor.

Pangastuti concurred with this direction, reflecting on the profound impact of the performance on personal understanding of consciousness: *"Iya, setuju. Dari performance kita jd memeriksa kembali konsep berkesadaran sesungguhnya benang merahnya apa? Ya sadar, pikiran tdk terombang ambing, fokus pd titik tertentu dsb."* (Yes, agreed. From the performance, we re-examined what the true common thread of the concept of consciousness is? Yes, aware, mind not wavering, focused on a certain point etc.) She further elaborated on the creative and individual nature of this awakening: *"Jd kita jd lebih kreatif menemukan jalan berkesadaran yg ternyata sifatnya sangat humanis dan akan sangat individual, ya benar saja selaras dg ajaran theravada ttg kendaraan pribadi."* (So, we become more creative in finding paths to awareness which turns out to be very humanistic and very individual, indeed in line with *Theravada* teachings about individual vehicle/path.) This highlights the personal and unique journey of consciousness fostered by the performance, aligning with *Theravada* principles of individual enlightenment.

Narrative of Sign Language Interpreter Feedback (June 15)

Feedback received on June 15 from a sign language interpreter highlighted significant challenges regarding accessibility for deaf Buddhists. It was noted by Katresna after a conversation with Saka that *"di (komunitas) tradisi Theravada Indonesia itu gak ada JBI buat buddhis tuli"* (in the Sangha Theravada tradition (community), there is no sign language interpreter for deaf Buddhists). A major barrier identified was that *"kosa kata buddhis nya belum diterjemahkan ke BISINDO"* (Buddhist vocabulary has not been translated into BISINDO).

The interpreter emphasized that *"Ketika seorang juru bahasa isyarat tidak memahami konteks dan makna substantif dari pemaparan, maka proses transfer informasi menjadi tidak utuh. Hal ini berpotensi menimbulkan kesalahan penafsiran (misinterpretasi) yang berdampak pada kegagalan penyampaian pesan kepada individu Tuli."* (When a sign language interpreter does not understand the context and substantive meaning of the presentation, the information transfer process becomes incomplete. This has the potential to cause misinterpretation, which impacts the failure of message delivery to deaf individuals.) A specific example of this miscommunication arose regarding *Anjali Mudra*. While the gesture was performed, the interpreter noted that the BISINDO meaning conveyed was *"sembah"* (worship/revere) or *"mengagungkan"* (to glorify), which they derived from browsing. Katresna clarified that in a Buddhist context, *Anjali Mudra* primarily means *"salam"* (greeting), akin to saying hello or a common salutation. This stark contrast in meaning, *"dalam hal ini, konteks dari bisindo (sembah, mengagungkan) arti sebenarnya dari anjali mudra adalah salam"* (in this case, the context of BISINDO (*sembah*, *mengagungkan*) the actual meaning of *Anjali Mudra* is greeting), led to a recognition of miscommunication where the same gesture had vastly different interpretations between Buddhist practice and BISINDO. The interpreter indicated that *"jbinya gak paham: Tulinya gak paham"* (the JBI doesn't understand: the deaf person doesn't understand) the nuance, suggesting a need for a common vocabulary or an approach like *"salam, terus anjali mudra"* (greeting, then *Anjali Mudra*) to bridge the gap.

The overall feedback lamented the lack of provision for deaf Buddhists during worship, stating: *"kasihan banget ya, buddhist tuli - gak disediain JBI selama ibadah"* (it's really a pity, deaf Buddhists - no JBI provided during worship). This issue extends beyond Buddhism, as similar challenges were noted for Hindu services where deaf individuals are given small books instead of sign language interpretation. Katresna also pointed out the absence of sign language equivalents for Buddhist concepts like chanting: *"tapi gak ada padanan bahasa isyarat nya misal mau ikut chanting juga gak diberi ruang. Padahal bisa*

saja chanting lewat bahasa isyarat" (but there are no sign language equivalents, for example, if they want to participate in chanting, there's no space provided. Even though chanting could be done through sign language). This underscores a significant gap in inclusive spiritual practice.

Key Themes of After Performance Reflection

The analysis of Katresna's, Saka's, Pangastuti's, Hidalgo's, and the sign language interpreter's reflections reveal several interconnected themes:

1. Sudden Insight and Analytical Breakthrough (Katresna - May 23): The core of Katresna's initial reflection is the "*pencerahan mendadak*" (sudden enlightenment) that provided a clear, analytical understanding of previously unaddressed issues, particularly unhealthy boundaries within a significant relationship. This suggests the performance acted as a catalyst for deeper cognitive processes, leading to crucial realizations.
2. Recognition of Cycles of Detachment and Disillusionment (*Nibbida* and *Viraga*) (Katresna - May 23): Katresna explicitly links his experience to "*beberapa kali siklus Nibbida dan Viraga*," terms that, in a Buddhist context, refer to disillusionment, disgust, and dispassion. This indicates that his current insight is not an isolated event but part of a larger, recurring pattern of becoming detached or disillusioned with certain realities, leading to new perspectives or transformations.
3. Profound Personal Change with Interpersonal Impact (Katresna - May 23): The reflection emphasizes a "*perubahan signifikan*" (significant change) within Katresna, which directly impacted others significantly. This highlights the ripple effect of individual insights on close relationships, underscoring the interconnectedness of personal growth and relational dynamics.
4. Process of Conflict and Pattern Recognition (Katresna - May 23): The three-day conflict process indicates that achieving this understanding required intensive mental and emotional engagement. This period of internal struggle culminated in the recognition of "*pola-pola yang sama terjadi sebelumnya, secara berulang*" (the same patterns had occurred before, repeatedly), suggesting a deeper integration of past experiences into his current understanding.
5. The Importance of Gradual Change and Collaborative Decision-Making (Katresna - May 23): Despite the "active enlightenment," Katresna received a vital reminder about the pace of change. The statement, *"perubahan yang baik terjadi secara perlahan – aku perlu melibatkan orang lain dalam pengambilan keputusan"* (good changes happen slowly – I need to involve others in decision-making), signifies a shift towards a more measured and inclusive approach to implementing the insights gained. This theme underscores the necessity of considering the impact on others and fostering shared agency in transformative processes.
6. Artistic Symbolism and Visual Storytelling (Saka - June 6): Saka's observations on the black-clad musician and white-clad dancer as "yin and yang" highlight the deliberate use of visual contrast to convey deeper philosophical meanings within the performance. This theme emphasizes the artistic choices made to create symbolic depth.
7. Philosophical Underpinnings and Existential Contemplation (Saka - June 6): Saka's detailed breakdown of the performance's illustrations of daily life ("eat, walk, drink") as connected to "jalan *dharma*" and his explicit mention of "*tilakana*" (*Tilakkhana*) and "*dukkha*" demonstrate the performance's engagement with profound Buddhist concepts. The idea of the performance "giving a mirror to the audience" (*Anatta*) further emphasizes its role in prompting existential self-reflection. This theme underscores the performance's success in weaving artistic expression with deep philosophical inquiry.
8. Ethical Considerations in Artistic Practice (Katresna - June 13): The discussion on June 13 introduced the crucial theme of applying Buddhist ethics to artistic decision-making. This includes Katresna's role as both producer and performer, how his "sudden enlightenment

(*nibbida*)" influenced his artistic choices (such as preferring Butoh due to practical constraints), the intent to facilitate meditation, change, and transformation, the concept of *Anatta* in the artistic process, and the importance of compassion in artistic facilitation.

9. Performance as an Approach to Buddhist Concepts (Hidalgo - June 13): Hidalgo's reflection clearly positions the performance as a primary means of introducing and exploring basic Buddhist concepts through art. This highlights the pedagogical and spiritual intent behind the artistic endeavor.
10. Humanistic and Individual Nature of Consciousness (Pangastuti - June 13): Pangastuti's reflection deepens the understanding of consciousness as a result of the performance. She emphasizes the re-examination of awareness, its focused nature, and the creative, humanistic, and individual paths to consciousness, aligning with the *Theravada* principle of individual journeys toward enlightenment.
11. Accessibility and Linguistic Gaps in Religious Practice (Sign Language Interpreter - June 15): The feedback from the sign language interpreter critically highlights the systemic lack of accessibility for deaf Buddhists in Indonesia. This includes the absence of dedicated interpreters and, more fundamentally, the lack of standardized BISINDO translations for specific Buddhist vocabulary and gestures (e.g., *Anjali Mudra*). The crucial point about the interpreter's lack of contextual understanding leading to misinterpretation, as exemplified by the *Anjali Mudra* case, underscores the significant barrier to participation and accurate understanding faced by deaf individuals in religious contexts and the urgent need for linguistic and interpretive bridging initiatives.

DISCUSSION

This study explores how Buddhist teachings (Dhamma) affect personal and artistic work in a collaborative art project in contemporary Indonesia. Our findings from the research team and performers highlight key points about using Practice as Research (PaR), how Dhamma is experienced in daily life, challenges for artistic expression linked to spirituality, and the importance of making art accessible for everyone.

Practice as Research: A Transformative and Fragile Journey

The Practice as Research (PaR) methodology proved to be a profoundly transformative, yet at times, personally challenging approach. As Vahed et al., p. (2018, p. 317) explained, what Katresna experienced was a reshaping of his sense of self, his ways of thinking, and his capacity for action. Allowing deep personal engagement with Dhamma principles inevitably led to a "fragile state," where personal boundaries and long held patterns were confronted. The journey of research itself became both the subject and agent of transformation, serving as a catalyst for earnest self-reflection on personal identities, challenges, and affirmations within professional and academic contexts (Vahed et al., 2018, p. 329).

The process, particularly for Katresna, manifested in cycles of *Nibbida* (disillusionment) and *Viraga* (dispassion), leading to moments of "sudden enlightenment." These insights, while ultimately leading to healing and deeper self-understanding, often caused internal conflict and required careful negotiation in interpersonal dynamics. Unexpected changes and intense emotions, for which one might be unprepared, can arise during the research process (Hamilton et al., 2012). Despite this, Hamilton et al. (2012) asserted that experiencing and acknowledging these powerful feelings throughout the research journey holds inherent worth.

Our research approach, therefore, enables a more authentic and deeply personal engagement with the research subject, leading to richer insights. PaR actively promotes researchers combining their academic and artistic identities, creating a unified and complete viewpoint where dedication and thoroughness are connected (Leavy, 2020, p. 3). This approach enables us to infuse our unique "personal

fingerprint or voice" into their projects, ensuring that their core values, commitment to justice, individual motivations, and societal aspirations are central to their investigations (Leavy, 2020, p. 31, 2023, p. 34). This methodology is also recognized as a means for individuals who primarily learn and express through action, rather than language, to participate in academic endeavors without leaving their fundamental practice behind (Nelson, 2022, p. 124).

Nibbida (Sanskrit: *nirveda*, *nirvid*) signifies a profound disenchantment with worldly life, described as weariness or indifference, which is not an emotional aversion but a conscious detachment arising from a deep understanding of reality's impermanence (Bodhi, 1980; Evmenenko, 2012, pp. 218–219); this insight shatters illusions of permanence, leading to a serene withdrawal from phenomena, diminishing interest in worldly happiness, fostering indifference to one's own body and mind as sources of suffering, and ultimately dispelling enchantment with conditioned existence. Following *Nibbida*, *Viraga* (also *virago*) represents dispassion or perfect wisdom, a crucial step towards liberation that frequently co-occurs with emancipation and Nibbana; it arises from a deep yearning for deliverance from the cycle of *samsaric* becoming, leading to the abandonment of grasping, a profound desire for release, and a quickening of insight that cuts through illusions, marking a fundamental shift towards realizing Nibbana by understanding the conditioned world rather than escaping it (Evmenenko, 2012).

This experience underscores that for research rooted in deeply embodied practice, the researcher's personal transformation is an integral, and indeed unavoidable, part of the methodological journey. It also highlights the importance of recognizing that significant personal and social change, even when driven by profound insights, requires a gradual and collaborative approach, involving others in the process of implementation. The journey of transformation often reveals unexpected insights and challenges, which can enrich the research and its outcomes.

Dhamma as Lived Experience and Universal Truth

Our project strongly supports the notion that "Dharma is everything," a concept rooted in the understanding that truth permeates all existence. As Masinter (2018) posited, Buddhadhamma cultivates a clear, open, and responsive mind and heart, empowering individuals and communities to address suffering in ways aligned with their unique Dhamma. Through the co-creative artistic process, Dhamma transcended its traditional textual or ritualistic forms to become a lived, experiential reality for the participants.

The workshops, individual reflections, and the collaborative performance itself provided a tangible medium for understanding core Buddhist concepts such as *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta* (non-self). For instance, the personal bodily exercises and the *Daundala Awicarita* activity allowed for direct, embodied engagement with these principles, fostering self-reflection and personal growth. This experiential learning aligns with Seeger et al. (2024) work on Buddhist performing arts, demonstrating how creative practices can effectively promote deeper understanding and engagement with Buddhist teachings and lived practices in contemporary contexts, extending their reach beyond traditional Indonesian Buddhist communities. The project showcased how Dhamma can offer comfort, answers to contemporary challenges, and a path for personal development for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, affirming its universal applicability. Somaratne, p. (2021, p. 26) has written that the understanding of Dhamma facilitates a complete transformation of one's experience from suffering to its cessation, which is the core goal that all studies of the Buddha's teachings should aim to achieve.

Artistic Expression: Navigating Ego, Authenticity, and Universal Resonance

A significant tension emerged regarding the intersection of artistic creation and Buddhist principles, particularly the concept of *anatta* (non-self) concerning the artist's inherent desire for acknowledgment and validation. As Hidalgo articulated, the danger exists that "what we perform is not the Buddha's teachings but ourselves" if the art is driven by ego. This struggle is particularly pertinent

in a context like Indonesia, where art is often perceived primarily as entertainment rather than a form of knowledge or academic inquiry.

However, the project also demonstrated how this tension can be navigated. By focusing on embodying Dhamma principles rather than explicitly labeling the art as "Buddhist," the performance aimed for universal resonance. Hoeurn & Yeavya (2024) discovered that Buddhist art is fundamentally about beauty that inspires devotion and access to goodness and truth, effectively translating theoretical Dhamma knowledge into practical application and integrating principles to address life's challenges. In comparison with Hoeurn & Yeavya (2024), who discuss its influence on Thai culture and its capacity to help individuals find solutions consistent with Buddhist ethics, such as the Threefold Training, often by selectively applying specific teachings to meet particular objectives, our study demonstrated a similar adaptive application within the Indonesian context.

Crucially, the co-creative process itself became a meditation: a shared practice of releasing individual artistic attachments to serve a larger, transformative purpose of conveying Dhamma. Ethical considerations in making Buddhist art, as posited in the reflections, specifically focused on facilitating meditation, change, and transformation; integrating *Anatta* (no-self) in artistic decision-making; and embodying compassion in artistic facilitation. Notably, published research on these ethical considerations within both Buddhist studies and art studies journals is scarce, suggesting that further study is needed to explore this area. These ethical considerations guided the artists' unique journeys, which showed different "personal vehicles" for awakening, fitting with Theravada teachings. For example, Pangastuti pursued creating songs for Bhante, which pushed her to gather puzzle pieces of Dhamma understanding; Saka chose a community-based path through teaching art and selling herbal drinks to support his artistic endeavors; Katresna found healing through art and his ever-changing life journey; and Hidalgo embarked on a physical and spiritual pilgrimage to Java. This approach suggests that truly Buddhist art might not declare its origin but rather embody it, allowing audiences to recognize its essence through experience.

Art as *Upaya Kausalya*: A Catalyst for Interreligious Dialogue

"Moving with Dharma" stands as a powerful example of *Upaya Kausalya*, or skillful means, particularly in fostering interreligious dialogue by transforming complex Buddhist teachings into an accessible, experiential format. The collaboration was uniquely enriched by the diverse positionalities of the co-authors Katresna (Muslim), and Pangastuti, Hidalgo, and Saka (Buddhists), creating an inherent space for genuine interreligious engagement.

Kallsen (2021) argues that dance, as a focused medium of creative and intentional movement, bridges theoretical gaps in dialogue by enabling laypeople to participate as active theologians and, with prior reflection on bodily views, can open a space for interreligious discussion. The iterative nature of the PaR methodology, combined with this collaborative artistic process, allowed participants and audience members alike to engage with Dhamma principles beyond abstract concepts, integrating them with personal experience and contemporary life, thereby transcending specific religious doctrines and acting as a powerful pedagogical tool for understanding Dhamma in Indonesia. The performance's positive audience response, including emotional releases and profound reflections, indicates the potency of this artistic approach in fostering meaningful interreligious dialogue by sharing the "gift of Dhamma" innovatively and inclusively, demonstrating how art can bridge religious divides and promote mutual understanding. Understanding Buddhist interreligious art requires an appreciation of its traditional purposes (meditation, spiritual advancement), the historical and ongoing debates surrounding representation, its subtle forms of hybridity often expressed through nature and cultural codes, and the critical implications of de- and re-contextualizing its imagery in a modern interreligious setting (Barbato, 2018). These multifaceted dimensions are crucial for effectively leveraging art in contemporary interreligious dialogue.

The Imperative of Accessibility and Linguistic Bridging

Despite the project's success in fostering interreligious dialogue through art, a critical challenge highlighted was the systemic lack of accessibility for deaf Buddhists in Indonesia. The feedback from the sign language interpreter revealed profound linguistic and contextual gaps. The absence of dedicated sign language interpreters in Theravada Buddhist communities and, more fundamentally, the lack of standardized BISINDO translations for specific Buddhist vocabulary and gestures (e.g., *Anjali Mudra*) create significant barriers to participation and accurate understanding. The misinterpretation of *Anjali Mudra* as "worship/revere" rather than "greeting" illustrates how a lack of contextual understanding can lead to fundamental misunderstandings of spiritual practices. This critically underscores the urgent need for collaborative initiatives between Buddhist communities, linguists, and sign language interpreters to develop and standardize BISINDO (*Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia*) vocabulary for Buddhist concepts and rituals. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of proactively integrating accessibility features, such as sign language interpretation, not just as a service but as an integral part of religious and artistic dissemination efforts.

The project, though meant to be inclusive, revealed a deep divide and a strong need for better linguistic and interpretive bridges for diverse audiences to truly engage with Dhamma. For instance, Dineen (2019) highlights that Traditional Zen practice often presents an environment inhospitable to d/Deaf participation due to its emphasis on sound, yet The Village Zendo has pioneered vocal-manual chanting, a hybrid of English and ASL, as a successful model for greater inclusion and equity by offering alternative visual, kinesthetic, and iconic ways of encountering vows. This specific example of deaf-inclusive practice in a Buddhist context highlights a broader challenge in Buddhist communities globally regarding deaf inclusion in worship and the creation of new sign language terms for Buddhist chanting and prayer, as evidenced by the scarcity of specific literature on these topics.

CONCLUSION

This study, "Moving with Dharma," explored how Buddhist teachings, particularly Dhamma, influence the personal and artistic processes involved in the creation of collaborative performance art within the contemporary Indonesian Buddhist context. Through a Practice as Research (PaR) methodology, we have demonstrated that engaging with Dhamma through co-creative artistic practice facilitates profound personal transformation and offers a universal pathway for understanding its principles, transcending traditional religious boundaries. This approach fosters a deeper connection between participants, enhancing the collaborative nature of the artistic process.

The research revealed that PaR, while transformative, is also a deeply personal and often challenging journey, leading to cycles of disillusionment (*Nibbida*) and dispassion (*Viraga*), culminating in moments of sudden insight. This process underscores that genuine engagement with embodied practice inevitably reshapes the researcher's self, thought patterns, and capacity for action. It highlights the critical need for gradual, collaborative approaches when implementing significant personal and social changes.

Our findings strongly affirm that "Dhamma is everything," manifesting as a lived, experiential reality through the collaborative artistic process rather than solely in textual or ritualistic forms. The workshops, individual reflections, and the performance itself provided tangible mediums for participants, both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, to directly engage with core Buddhist concepts such as impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*). This experiential learning fostered self-reflection and personal growth, demonstrating Dhamma's universal applicability and its capacity to offer comfort and answers to contemporary challenges.

The project also navigated the inherent tension between artistic creation and Buddhist principles, particularly the artist's desire for acknowledgment versus the concept of non-self. We found that by embodying Dhamma principles subtly, without explicit religious labeling, the art achieved universal resonance, acting as a form of skillful means (*Upaya Kausalya*). The co-creative process itself became

meditation, where artists released individual attachments to serve the larger purpose of conveying Dhamma. This approach facilitated interreligious dialogue, proving that art can effectively bridge religious divides and promote mutual understanding of the "gift of Dhamma."

However, our study also brought to light a critical systemic issue: the significant lack of accessibility for deaf Buddhists in Indonesia. The absence of dedicated sign language interpreters in Theravada Buddhist communities and the fundamental lack of standardized BISINDO (Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia) translations for specific Buddhist vocabulary and gestures create profound linguistic and contextual gaps. The misinterpretation of the *Anjali Mudra* exemplifies how a lack of contextual understanding can lead to fundamental misunderstandings of spiritual practices. This underscores an urgent need for collaborative initiatives between Buddhist communities, linguists, and sign language interpreters to develop and standardize accessible vocabulary and proactively integrate sign language interpretation as an integral part of religious and artistic dissemination efforts.

In conclusion, "Moving with Dharma" has showcased the transformative power of co-creative art as a means of exploring and embodying Buddhist teachings in contemporary Indonesia. It has illuminated Dhamma's universal relevance. It highlighted the ethical considerations in spiritual artistic practice, and, critically, revealed the imperative for greater inclusivity and linguistic bridging to ensure that the profound wisdom of Dhamma is truly accessible to all.

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